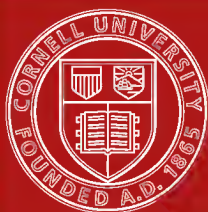


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FECHTER



*THE STAGE HISTORY OF FAMOUS PLAYS.*

# HAMLET

From the Actors' Standpoint.

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ITS REPRESENTATIVES,

—AND A—

Comparison of Their Performances.

BY HENRY P. PHELPS,

AUTHOR OF "PLAYERS OF A CENTURY."

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NEW YORK:

EDGAR S. WERNER.

1890.

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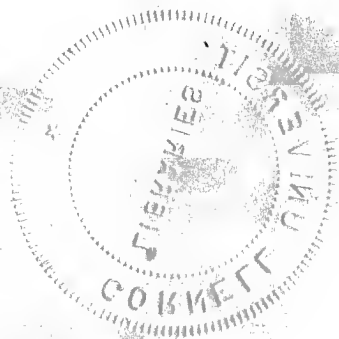
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TO THE  
*Students of Shakspeare,*  
IN THE CLOSET AND ON BOTH SIDES THE  
FOOT-LIGHTS, THIS VOLUME  
IS DEDICATED  
BY  
*The Author.*

*His was the spell o'er hearts  
Which only Acting lends,—  
The youngest of the Sister Arts,  
Where all their beauty blends:  
For ill can Poetry express  
Full many a tone of thought sublime,  
And Painting, mute and motionless,  
Steals but a glance of Time.  
But by the mighty Actor brought,  
Illusion's perfect triumphs come,—  
Verse ceases to be airy thought,  
And Sculpture to be dumb.*

[THOMAS CAMPBELL's "Valedictory Stanzas to J. P. Kemble,"—  
composed for a Public Meeting held June, 1817.

## PREFACE.

---

*It may be thought unnecessary, and, perhaps, presumptuous, to add in the slightest degree to the mass of literature that, for nearly two hundred years, and in many languages, has been accumulating around the play and the character of Hamlet. The writer, however, does not profess to advance any new theories, nor to sit in judgment upon old ones; neither does he ask to be credited with anything more than for the first time bringing together from many sources and in a comparative form, the ideas, as expressed in their several performances, of the stage Hamlets themselves—the men of all men who have given the subject most consideration, and to whom the world owes the most illuminating commentaries the great poem has ever had.*

*The writer is well aware that by the consideration of each scene separately, the actor's conception, taken as a whole and regarded from the philosophic, theoretical and æsthetic stand-points, is lost sight of; but if there is little of that treatment to be found here, it is not lacking elsewhere. The object has been rather to focus the combined intelligence of stage-artists upon the great passages of the play than to set forth the views or merits of any individual actor.*

*The authorities cited may appear, in some instances, to contradict one another, but this can be accounted for from the fact that many actors are constantly changing their*

*representations as experience or fancy dictates, and so from year to year, their performances differ and are differently described.*

*These notes are preceded by an account of the most illustrious Hamlets known to the stage, and here the writer has been compelled to follow in the steps of Mr. Austin Brereton, whose "Some Famous Hamlets" appeared in London some time after this part of the present work was begun.*

*If this experiment in dealing with the stage history and aspect of Hamlet meets with the approval of those whom it is intended to interest, other plays may receive similar treatment at the hands of the writer, who, as one of the toilers of the Press, has made long and diligent search among theatrical annals for the information which it is proposed to embody in a "STAGE HISTORY OF FAMOUS PLAYS," of which this may be considered the first volume.*

*To those already deeply learned in dramatic lore it is scarcely to be expected that such a series will present other merit than that of convenience, inasmuch as it must, of necessity, be largely a compilation of matter already in print, although widely scattered and not easily attainable; but to the many who have yet something to learn, actors, professional and amateur, students of Shakspeare and the drama generally, as well as the great unclassified public for whom "The Play" has an abiding interest, it is hoped this volume, and those which may succeed it, will prove both entertaining and instructive.*

H. P. PHELPS.

*Brookside Avenue,*

*Menands, Albany, N. Y.,*

*Oct. 1, 1890.*

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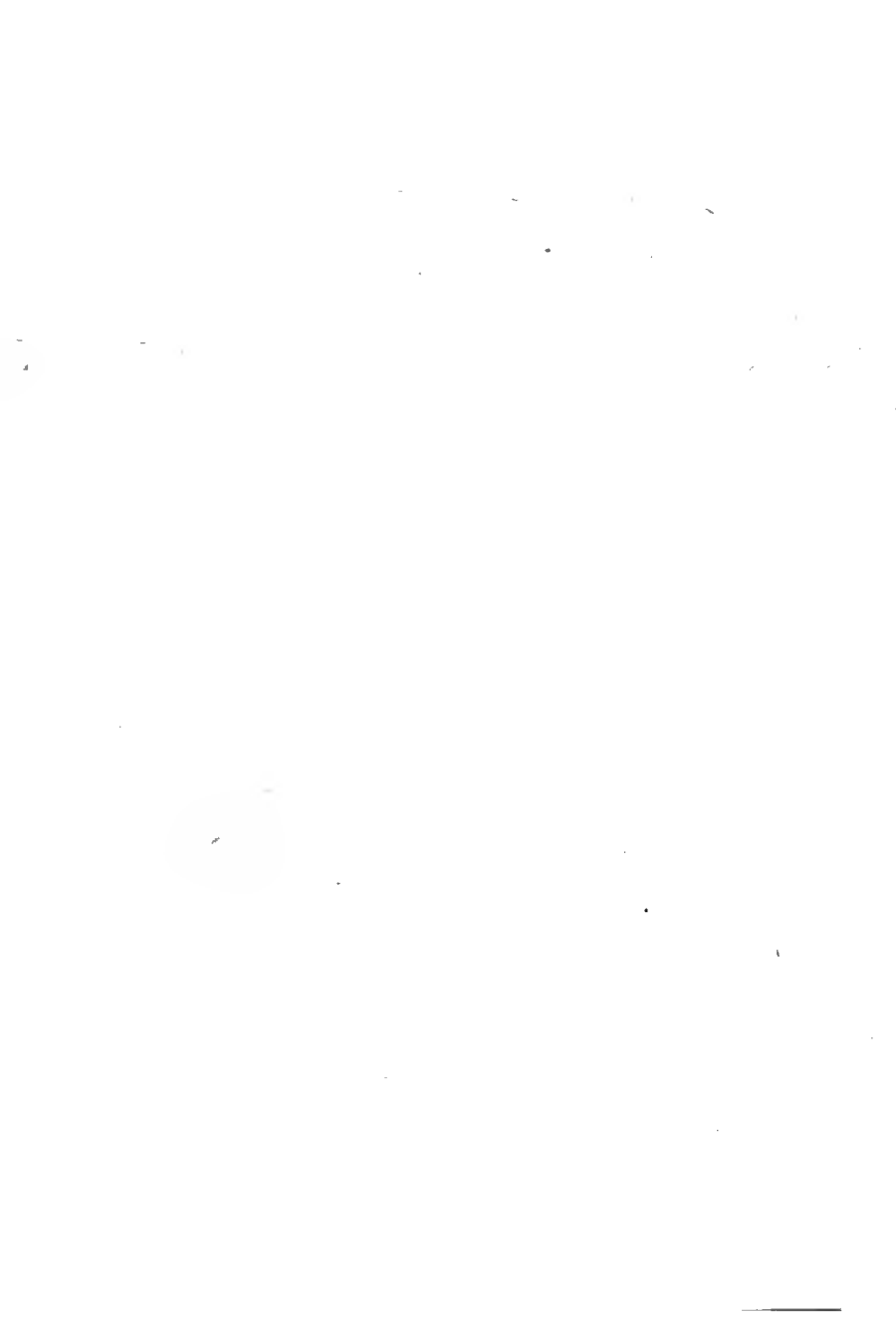
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# THE HAMLETS OF THE STAGE.



## H A M L E T .

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“FROM the first performance of Hamlet to the present day, we may reasonably conclude that no dramatic piece whatever has laid hold on the public affection so strongly and been acted so frequently.”

So wrote Tom Davies in 1784, and the record of the last hundred years serves rather to strengthen than to modify the opinion. No play in any literature has such a stage history. First acted in 1602, it has held the boards for nearly three centuries, saving only such intervals as when there were no theatres, or when the works of Shakspeare were lost sight of altogether. Since the days of Burbage before the Restoration and of Betterton after it, Hamlet has been played by more actors, and has had longer uninterrupted runs than any other of the legitimate dramas. Its title rôle is one to which all tragedians aspire; it is one in which failure is well-nigh impossible; and the play to-day, notwithstanding its metaphysical character, remains as fresh in interest and as popular with all classes as ever. It is no daring prophecy to assert that as long as the English language is spoken and the English drama finds representation at all, so long will Hamlet be made a source of pleasure to the spectator, a pathway of fame to the actor, and a mine of revenue to the theatrical treasury.

### *Richard. Burbage.*

Richard Burbage (1566-1619) was the first of the long, unended line of Hamlets. “King Dick,” as his

fellow actors called him, because of his greater fame as Richard III., was short and stout, to which is attributed the reason why Shakspeare made Hamlet "fat and scant of breath." How he played or even dressed the part, no one knows. Not one word written during his lifetime descriptive of him as an actor has come down to us, although after his death, this tribute among others was paid to his memory:

"He's gone, and with him what a world are dead,  
Friends every one, and what a blank instead;  
Take him for all in all, he was a man  
Not to be matched, and no age ever can.  
No more young Hamlet, though but scant of breath  
Shall cry 'Revenge' for his dear father's death.  
Oft have I seen him leap into the grave  
Suiting the person which he seemed to have  
Of the mad lover with so true an eye  
That there I would have sworn he meant to die."

It has been claimed that Joseph Taylor and John Lowin, both members of the Globe Company in Shakspeare's time, played Hamlet, and both have been called the original Hamlet, the latter by Schlegel and Payne Collier; the former by Davies. Downes, in his "*Roscius Anglicanus*," says:

"Sir William Davenant having seen Mr. Taylor, of the Black-Frier's Playhouse, act this part (who was instructed by the author Shakspeare), remembered him so well that he taught Mr. Betterton in every article; which, by his exact performance, gained the actor esteem and reputation."

Mr. Austin Brereton, who for his "*Some Famous Hamlets*" (1884), investigated the matter carefully, concludes that "there is no record whatever of Lowin having even so much as appeared in the character. Taylor certainly acted Hamlet, but he did so after Burbage."

**Thomas Betterton.**

Of Thomas Betterton (1635-1710), the second great Hamlet, there is more definite knowledge. Pepys records in his diary:

"May 28, 1663—To the Duke's house, and there saw Hamlet done, giving us fresh reason never to think enough of Betterton.

"Aug. 31, 1668—To the Duke of York's play-house, and there saw Hamlet, which we have not seen this year before, or more; and mightily pleased with it, but above all with Betterton, the best part, I believe, that ever man acted."

When we consider the rather light estimate in which this amusing old critic held the plays and characters of Shakspeare, this is praise indeed. Betterton first played Hamlet when he was twenty-six years old. The Ophelia was Mistress Sanderson, said by some authorities to have been the first woman actress on the English stage. With her he was in love, and soon afterward they were married. At first he played Hamlet in the dress of a courtier of Charles II., and later with streaming shoulder-knots, cocked hat and powdered wig.

It was Betterton who, when manager, and annoyed at one of the early performances of Colley Cibber, ordered five shillings to be deducted from his pay, but learning that he received no salary, still maintained discipline by putting him on the pay-roll at ten shillings a week and fining him five for punishment. Cibber and Addison were loud in his praise as an actor. Yet it was written of him (by Anthony Aston) that he "had an ill figure, large head, short, thick neck, stooped shoulders and long arms. He had little eyes, broad face, a little

pock-marked, corpulent body, thick legs, and large feet. His voice, low and grumbling, yet he could tune it by an artful climax which enforced universal attention, even from the fops and orange girls."

Surely, this is hardly the glass of fashion and the mould of form, but the description, if ever it approached truth, did so only in his old age, for he was on the stage fifty years. He is buried in Westminster Abbey.

Robert Wilks (1670-1732) won some reputation as Hamlet. Colley Cibber tells us that when in company with Mr. Addison they were both surprised at the vociferous manner in which Wilks spoke to the Ghost. This was greatly censured by them both. Barton Booth, one day at rehearsal, reproached Wilks for this: "I thought," said he, "Bob, that last night you wanted to play fisty cuffs with me; you bullied that which you ought to have revered. When I acted the Ghost with Betterton, instead of my awing him, he terrified me. But divinity hung about that man." To this rebuke Wilks, with his usual modesty, replied: "Mr. Betterton and Mr. Booth could always act as they pleased; he, for his part, must do as well as he could."

### **David Garrick.**

David Garrick (1716-1779) first played Hamlet at Dublin in 1742, with Peg Woffington as Ophelia. Strange as it may seem, some who had seen Betterton in their younger days, were willing to admit that the new Hamlet was his superior in that character. The passages in which he was most effective are elsewhere noted.

Like some other great actors and managers, Garrick attempted to improve on Shakspeare. The first act of

Hamlet he thought too long, and so ended it with Hamlet's expressed determination to watch for the Ghost. The third act was extended to the fourth. But little change was made in the language or scenery till the fifth act, in which Laertes arrives and Ophelia is distracted, as in the original. The plotting scenes between the King and Laertes to destroy Hamlet were entirely changed, and the character of Laertes rendered more estimable. Hamlet, having escaped from Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, returns with a firm determination to avenge the death of his father. The grave-diggers were absolutely thrown out of the play. The audience were not informed of the death of Ophelia, and the Queen, instead of being poisoned on the stage, was led from her seat and said to be in a state of insanity, owing to her sense of guilt. When Hamlet attacks the King, the King draws his sword, and defends himself, and is killed in the rencounter. Laertes and Hamlet die of their mutual wounds.

Garrick contended that, according to Shakspeare, the King was stuck like a pig on the stage, whereas by giving the murderer courage he did not lessen the meanness of his character. But, says Davies, the spectators would not part with their old friends, the grave-diggers, and soon called for Hamlet as it had been acted before.

*Biographia Dramatica*: "HAMLET. Altered by Mr. Garrick. Acted at Drury Lane, 1771. This alteration was made in the true spirit of Bottom the Weaver, who wishes to play not only the part assigned him, but all the rest in the piece. Mr. Garrick, in short, had reduced the consequence of every character but that

represented by himself ; and thus excluding Osric, the grave-diggers, etc., contrived to monopolize the attention of the audience. Our poet had furnished Laertes with a dying address, which afforded him a local advantage over the Prince of Denmark. This circumstance was no sooner observed than the speech was taken away from the former and adopted by the latter. After the death of the player, the public indeed vindicated the rights of the poet, by starving the theatres into compliance with their wishes to see Hamlet as originally meant for exhibition. Mr. Garrick had once designed to publish the changes he had made in it, and (as was usual with him in the course of similar transactions) had accepted a compliment from the booksellers, consisting of a set of Olivet's edition of Tully; but, on second thought, with a laudable regard to his future credit, he returned the acknowledgment, and suppressed the alterations. In short, no bribe but his own inimitable performance, could have prevailed on an English audience to sit patiently and behold the martyrdom of their favorite author."

A story was at one time in circulation that Garrick's copy of these alterations was buried with him, but Mr. Kemble had in his library what Boaden believed to be the very copy of the play upon which these alterations were made.

Boaden thus describes them :

"He cut out the voyage to England, and the execution of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern; he omitted the funeral of Ophelia, and all the wisdom of the Prince and the rude jocularity of the grave-diggers. Hamlet bursts in upon the King and his court, and Laertes reproaches him with his father's and his sister's deaths. The exasperation of both is at its height, when the King interposes; he had commanded Hamlet to depart for England, and declares that he will no longer bear this



rebellious conduct, but that his wrath shall at length fall heavy upon the Prince. 'First,' exclaims Hamlet, 'feel you mine;' and he instantly stabs him. The Queen rushes out imploring the attendants to save her from her son. Laertes, seeing treason and murder before him, attacks Hamlet to avenge his father, his sister and his King. He wounds Hamlet mortally, and Horatio is on the point of making Laertes accompany him to the shades when the Prince commands him to desist, assuring him that it was the hand of heaven, which administered by Laertes, that precious balm for all his wounds. We then learn that the miserable mother has dropped in a trance ere she could reach her chamber-door, and Hamlet implores for her an hour of penitence ere madness ends her. He then joins the hands of Laertes and Horatio, and commands them to unite their virtues (as a coalition of ministers) to 'calm the troubled land.' The old couplet as to the bodies concludes the play. All this is written in a mean and trashy common-place manner, and, in a word, sullied the page of Shakspeare, and disgraced the taste and judgment of Garrick."

### George Frederick Cooke.

George Frederick Cooke (1756-1812) attempted Hamlet for the first time in London, September 27, 1802, and failed. He says himself :

"On Monday, the 27th, I acted Hamlet to a very numerous audience. Next day the newspapers, some of whom I believe were prepared for the business, attacked me in a manner that would have been deemed impossible to have happened to any one who had ever received the slightest approbation from an audience — a London one, I mean. I repeated it once, but never since [written in 1807]. I do not doubt but I had faults in abundance, but had I acted it as well as I had seen it acted by Garrick, my reception in that character

would have been much the same. I believe the second night was worse than the first, and the cause is too obvious to mention."

Dunlap, his biographer, adds:

"Mr. Kemble was at this time absent from England, and he was, in the opinion of the greater part of the public, the only possible representative of Hamlet. Now Hamlet was looked upon as Mr. Kemble's property; and it would be felt, if not thought dishonest, to seize it in his absence. It was like taking possession of a man's house while he was making a journey. Under these circumstances, it was an ill-judged attempt of Mr. Harris, and must have failed, even if Mr. Cooke had been much better qualified by nature and habit for the part than he was. That Mr. Cooke was not at this time qualified to contend for the character of Hamlet, I am assured, though I may be wrong to ascribe the cause to any natural deficiency. Had Cooke become the favorite of the London audience in 1780, instead of 1800 — at the age of 25, instead of 45 — had he been free from the habits which twenty years of low society had 'buckled upon him,' we might have seen in him a Hamlet though essentially different, not inferior to Kemble's, or to Garrick's."

### *John Philip Kemble.*

John Philip Kemble (1757-1823) played Hamlet on his first appearance at Drury Lane, September 30, 1783. He discarded the Garrick version, the bills announcing the play as originally written by Shakspeare. Boaden, his biographer, says his Hamlet was decidedly original. He had seen no great actor whom he could have copied. The criticisms that he evoke from what were called "new readings" were many. It is admitted that he was nat-



JOHN P. KEMBLE.



urally slow and contemplative, and his utterances tardy. It was said by some that his pauses were too long; but all agreed that he was far removed from being commonplace. One critic said he was "too scrupulously graceful." Points wherein he differed from Garrick and from Henderson have been carefully noted by Boaden, as will be seen elsewhere.

Mr. Kemble played the part in a modern court dress of rich dark velvet with a star on the breast, the garter and pendant ribbon of an order, mourning sword and buckles, with deep ruffles; the hair in powder, which in scenes of feigned distraction flowed disheveled in front and over his shoulders.

His brother Stephen (1758-1822), "the big Kemble," as he was called to distinguish him from the great Kemble, also played the part quite frequently, the more so, perhaps, because his wife was such a charming Ophelia. He dressed the character in an old-fashioned black coat, breeches, vest, buckle-shoes and a flowing auburn wig.

### *Charles Kemble.*

Charles Kemble (1775-1854), the brother of John Kemble and the father of Fanny Kemble, although more especially noted for excellence in secondary characters, played Hamlet not infrequently. He maintained, and his daughter agreed with him, that Hamlet was really mad.

Fanny Kemble says:

"I have acted Ophelia three times with my father, and each time in that beautiful scene where his madness and his love gush forth together like a torrent swollen with storms, that bears a thousand blossoms on its

---

stormy waters, I have experienced such deep emotion as hardly to be able to speak. The exquisite tenderness of his voice, the wild compassion and forlorn pity of his looks, bestowing that on others which of all others he most needed; the melancholy restlessness, the bitter self-scorning; every shadow of expression and intonation was so full of the mingled anguish that the human heart is capable of enduring, that my eyes scarce fixed on his ere they filled with tears, and long before the scene was over, the letters and jewel-cases I was tendering to him were wet with them. The hardness of professed actors and actresses is something amazing. After this part I could not but recall the various Ophelias I have seen, and commend them for the astonishing absence of everything like feeling which they exhibited. Oh, it made my heart sore to act it."

Hamlet was the most popular character played by Charles Mayne Young (1777-1856), an actor of the Kemble school. It is related that during his first performance of Hamlet in London, he was nearly disconcerted by the persistent hissing of one man, who proved to be his own father. Young lacked tenderness and pathos, and was at his best in the play-scene and in the fencing with Laertes.

### *Edmund Kean.*

On March 12, 1814, Edmund Kean (1787-1833) appeared for the first time in London, as Hamlet. Miss Smith (afterward Mrs. Bartley) was the Ophelia; Downton, Polonius; Bannister, the Grave-digger, and Raymond, the Ghost. The curiosity of the public relative to the new actor suffered no abatement, and the receipts that evening were £660. The critics differed as to the performance. He did not in his appearance answer the

previous notions of Hamlet, because it had been the custom to associate with the character a grave, noble, attenuated form, the ideal personification of grief. However, he represented ably the better part of the princely Dane—the intellectual part.

To further quote Barry Cornwall:

“We beheld, or rather felt, the real sadness of the soul, the nobility of his nature, his filial affection, his spirit lost in starry contemplation—in abstraction from the things that be. We saw ‘the rapt soul sitting in the eyes.’

“Mrs. Garrick, who went to the theatre every night of Kean’s engagement, was not, it seems, entirely satisfied with his personification of Hamlet, and wrote to him requesting him to call upon her. He went, and she placed him in her husband’s chair. It was the only chair that she would allow him to sit in, and she said that she would keep it solely for him. At the same time, she insisted that in the closet-scene he was too tame—that is to say, tamer than her husband. She made him act it over again with her, and play it in her ‘husband’s manner.’ He was tired to death of this instruction second-hand, but did not altogether disregard it. In fact, he acted the closet-scene afterward in ‘Garrick’s manner,’ and never satisfied himself or others. He always considered Hamlet to be his best part; he had studied it more than any other, and was outrageous at having been coaxed into playing it in a manner contrary to his judgment.”

Hazlitt said of Kean’s Hamlet:

“It was too strong and pointed. There was often a severity approaching to virulence, in the common observations and answers. There is nothing of this in Hamlet. He is, as it were, wrapped up in the cloud of his reflections, and only thinks aloud. There should,

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therefore, be no attempt to impress what he says upon others by any exaggeration of emphasis or manner; no talking at his hearers. There should be as much of the gentleman and scholar as possible infused into the part, and as little of the actor. A pensive air of sadness should sit unwillingly upon his brow, but no appearance of fixed or sullen gloom. He is full of 'weakness and melancholy,' but there is no harshness in his nature. Hamlet should be the most amiable of misanthropes. There is no one line in the play that should be spoken like any one line in Richard; yet Mr. Kean did not appear to us to keep the two characters always distinct. But to point out the defects of Mr. Kean's performance is a less grateful but much shorter task than to enumerate the many striking beauties which he gave to it, both by the power of his action and by the true feeling of nature."

James H. Hackett, the famous Falstaff, says of Mr. Kean's Hamlet:

"Of all the attempts to act Hamlet which I have seen, Mr. [Edmund] Kean's pleased me most. In Hamlet's advice to the players and in the strictly declamatory portions of the character, Mr. Kean did not particularly excel, but he seemed to me to have inspired and more ably to illustrate the soul of Hamlet than any actor whom I have seen in the part; its intellectuality and sensitiveness were wrought into transparent prominence; every particle of its satire was given with extraordinary pungency; its sentiment was on each occasion very impressively uttered, and the melancholy was plaintively toned and sympathy-winning; the action was free and natural and never ungraceful, the passion heart-stirring, and the poetry was read with correct emphasis and a nice ear to rhythmical measure; yet Kean's Hamlet, which surprised and enraptured me, I discovered, to my surprise and chagrin, was not particularly appreciated by the most intelligent of our New York audiences."



**Junius Brutus Booth.**

Junius Brutus Booth (1796—1852), father of the present tragedian, Edwin Booth, at his first benefit in New York played Hamlet and Jerry Sneak the same evening! Hamlet was his favorite part.

Gould says of it:

“The total impression left by Mr. Booth’s Hamlet at the time of its occurrence, and which still abides, was that of a spiritual melancholy, at once acute and profound. This quality colored his tenderest feeling and his airiest fancy as well as his graver purpose. You felt its presence even when he was off the stage. As the Claude mirror defines, refines, and tones the landscape, so Booth’s impersonation left a saddened and mysterious charm to the vast world of Hamlet’s thought and observation.”

Mr. Hackett says:

“Mr. Booth read Hamlet with a good degree of understanding, and he had a fine intellectual eye and cast of countenance (1831), but his voice was nasal, the action of his arms awkward—they seemed as though they were pinioned at the elbows; he was below the medium stature and had very bandy legs, and his gait and bearing were not susceptible of depicting any personal dignity; indeed, such were Mr. Booth’s natural impediments that no human genius could surmount, or blind an intelligent spectator, or cause him to forget them, and esteem his personation of Hamlet satisfactory or tolerable.”

Booth having been kind to a horse-thief named Fontaine, *alias* Lovett, confined in the Louisville jail, and paying counsel to defend him, although the case was hopeless, Lovett bequeathed his skull to the actor, requesting him that he would use it on the stage in Ham-

let, and think when he held it in his hands of the gratitude his kindness had awakened. Accordingly, after the thief had been hanged, the skull was sent to Mr. Booth's residence. He was not at home, and Mrs. Booth, finding the horrible gift left at the house, had it sent back forthwith to the doctor, who had prepared and delivered it. In 1857 the doctor sent the same skull to Edwin Booth who used it a few times in the grave-yard scene, and then had it buried.

### Charles Kean.

Charles Kean (1811-1868), the son of Edmund Kean, first played Hamlet in London, at Drury Lane, January 8, 1838. His former appearances in London had not been successful, and this, after some years in the provinces, was looked upon as his real *début* in the great city. He had to contend, as he did through life, with the memory of his father, but he won much praise from the critics of the time. It was admitted, however, that his Hamlet was too tearful for the best effect. He acted the part for twenty-one nights during this engagement, to a total of £6,236. He had never seen his father in the part, and his "business" was his own. His fencing was much praised. On the whole, it was thought that he was more melodramatic than Shakspearian.

Mr. James H. Hackett, who was extremely fastidious in his taste for Hamlets, says:

"Charles Kean's Hamlet discovers various proofs of a defective ear, by sundry false emphases, bad cadences and misplaced pauses; his personation was remarkable for clap-trap effects with which it superabounds; in short, it was a tissue of bustle, rant and posturing; his person

underwent unceasing locomotion, and was not in repose even during the profoundest of the metaphysical soliloquies."

So much for the criticism of one who essayed the part of Hamlet himself, and not with superabounding success either. Mr. Kean was highly complimented by J. G. Lockhart, the biographer of Sir Walter Scott; by Serjeant Talford, Serjeant Adams, J. H. Merivale, and others, all of whom are on record in Cole's "Life and Times of Charles Kean" (1860).

The *Morning Post* (London) said, in substance, that Mr. Kean tried to combine the romantic style of acting Hamlet, of which Edmund Kean was the most prominent representative, with the classic style, of which Mr. Young was the most distinguished professor, but that the romantic predominated.

A year later the *Post* said:

"In relation to Mr. Kean's Hamlet, there will be always conflicting opinions. Our own is, that it is of a very high order. Unequal, it is true, but at times full of fire, at times, of feeling; never violating proprieties, and often producing fine effects. Let us, however, add that Hamlet is to our mind the most difficult part within our knowledge of all the conceptions of Shakspeare; that Mr. Kean's own father misread it, and gave us a startling performance instead of a true one; that John Kemble did not master all its fine subtle delicacies, and that Charles Young alone of all whom we have seen play it, brought it nearest to anything like an even and equable perfection."

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**William C. Macready.**

William C. Macready (1793-1873) first played Hamlet in 1811, at Newcastle, at the age of eighteen. He says of it:

"A total failure in Hamlet is of rare occurrence. My crude essay, like those of many others, was pronounced a success; but the probing inquiry and laborious study of my after life have manifested to me how little was due to my skill in that early personation. The thought and practice I have through my professional career devoted to it, made it, in my own judgment and in those of critics whom I had most reason to fear and respect, one of my most finished, though not the most popular of my repertoire."

Nevertheless he says elsewhere that in America no play drew so much money as Hamlet when he appeared in it.

George Henry Lewes says:

"His [Macready's] Hamlet I thought bad, due allowance being made for the intelligence displayed. He was lachrymose and fretful; too fond of a cambric pocket handkerchief to be really affecting; nor, as it seemed to me, had he that sympathy with the character which would have given an impressive unity to his performance—it was 'a thing of shreds and patches,' not a whole."

Hackett on Macready's Hamlet:

"Mr. Macready continues after Hamlet's opening scene to weep and whine too much, and resorts to his handkerchief too often; moves about the stage too often and too briskly, and in too clerk-like a gait for one of a princely education, leisurely habits and a contemplative turn of mind; his manner is also generally

too hurried and restless, and he imparts to the features a spasmodic expression in many of their variations. In speaking he seldom used his left arm, but kept it under his cloak; in short, his manner generally wanted ease, was seldom graceful, and never exhibited the repose characteristic of a philosophic mind."

James E. Murdoch on the same subject:

"As a well-painted picture, harmonious in its details, well executed in perspective, perfect in light and shade, and striking in its objective point of sight, natural in tone and color, appropriately framed and artistically hung, fills the eye of the beholder with pleasure, so was Macready's Hamlet an object of infinite delight to the auditor. It was almost universally considered the master-piece of England's most artistic and intellectual tragedian. Yet in a dramatic sense, from the standpoint of natural effect, it was merely a picture of the melancholy and still intensely impassioned child of sorrow and affliction. We mean that it was such a picture that one might stand before it entranced in a generalism of human sympathies, and yet it lacked any strongly individual or central point of affinity. How often do we hear the remark, 'That is a beautiful or highly finished picture of such or such a one,' or 'that is a speaking likeness of my friend; he talks to me from the canvas, and yet, I confess, it might be more artistically executed in detail.'"

In the scene with Horatio just before the entrance of the court who assemble to witness the play, Macready, at the words,

"They are coming to the play; I must be idle,"

waved a handkerchief and skipped about the stage performing what Forrest called the *pas de mouchoir*. This so offended the taste of the American actor when he saw Macready in Edinburgh that he hissed, an act which

was indirectly the cause of one of the most lamentable episodes in the history of the theatre. Macready, in his diary, says:

"Edinburgh, March 2 (1846)—Acted Hamlet with particular care, energy and discrimination. On reviewing the performance I can conscientiously pronounce it one of the very best I have ever given of Hamlet. At the waving of the handkerchief before the play, and 'I must be idle,' a man on the right side of the stage hissed! The audience took it up, and I waved the more and bowed derisively and contemptuously to the individual. The audience carried it although he was very staunch to his purpose. It discomposed me, and alas! might have ruined many; but I bore it down. I thought of speaking to the audience if called on, and spoke to Murray about it, but he very discreetly dissuaded me. Was called for and very warmly greeted. Ryder came and told me that the hisser was observed and said to be a Mr. W—— who was in company with Mr. Forrest!

"March 3. Fifty-three years have I lived to-day. Both Mr. Murray and Mr. Ryder are possessed with the belief that Mr. Forrest was the man who hissed last night. I begin to think he was the man."

Forrest *was* the man. He made no denial, but on the other hand, in the newspaper controversy that followed, attempted to justify himself in so doing. The quarrel grew hot between the two actors, and when Macready appeared in this country two years later it was taken up with great fierceness, both by the men themselves, and by their injudicious friends. Finally, the contest culminated in an attempt to drive Macready from the stage while he was playing at the Astor Place Opera House in New York, in May, 1849. A riot took place, the National Guard were called out, and they

being attacked by the mob, fired, leaving thirty dead bodies on the ground, and wounding severely as many more.

Forrest retained his critical habit till late in life; and when Barry Sullivan was playing in this country his innovations were shown to be very distasteful to the veteran who occupied a box at the Walnut Street Theatre, Philadelphia.

As Barrett tells us:

"He had shown his dislike of many changes in the production of Hamlet, during the first two acts, and his bearing had attracted the attention of Sullivan and the audience. Hamlet bided his time, and when he came to a point in the second act which he thought offered him the opportunity he wanted, he took Guildenstern and Rosencrantz aside, and advancing toward the box in which Forrest sat, pointed his finger at him, and said in the words of the text: 'Do you see that great baby yonder? He is not yet out of his swaddling-clouts.' Mingled hisses and applause were the actor's reward for what was certainly 'a hit, a palpable hit,' although perhaps not in the best taste."

James Rees, one of Forrest's biographers, who, as a rule, defends him in everything, blames him for hissing Macready, not merely on the ground of bad taste and discourtesy, but for the reason that a fancy dance, as Forrest calls it, was not out of place for Hamlet to perform in his state of mind, which, as Mr. Rees holds, with Charles Kemble, was insanity. Mr. Rees says further that the dance was not original with Macready, but that he had seen it done at the Chestnut Street Theatre, Philadelphia, years before, but by what actor he does not say.

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**Edwin Forrest.**

Edwin Forrest (1806-1872) was not physically suited to represent Hamlet, although it was a favorite with him, and it was admitted that he read the part with great discrimination, and that his conception was excellent. "Hamlet," says Barrett, "added nothing to his fame."

Hackett says:

"I was present at Forrest's original début as Hamlet (1829), but he seemed out of his element; his spirit seemed incapable of being subdued to the normal quality and meditative propensity of Hamlet's philosophic mind; his iron nerve and powerful physique appeared to pant continually for opportunities or pretext to display themselves; his evident uneasiness suggested to me such as I would conceive natural to a young but full-grown and newly-caged lion; indeed, it struck me that could Mr. Forrest's Hamlet have been, through some accident, allowed to ventilate his own impulses for a few moments as soon as his father's Ghost had bidden him 'Adieu,' etc., he would have bounded unceremoniously into the presence of his uncle Claudius, and with the impetuosity of an enraged and sinewy athlete have driven his rapier through and through his heart, and ended the play in the first act."

**Charles Fechter.**

Of all the latter-day Hamlets none was the cause of so much discussion as that of Charles Fechter (1824-1879). It was so in England; it was particularly so in this country where the Hamlet of Edwin Booth had come to be accepted as a model. Fechter's differed from his as radically as the rose differs from the lily; conception, performance, appearance—all were different.





EDWIN FORREST.



Everywhere Fechter created two parties,—those who admired him intensely, and those who condemned him wholly. Few there were who took half-way ground; he was either a wonderful artist, or he was little better than a mountebank.

Hermann Vezin, in whose opinion Hermann Hendrich was the very finest Hamlet he had ever seen, says Fechter will rank high in the roll of great actors who have excelled in that character.

Wilkie Collins is more decided:

“From Macready downward, I have, I think, seen every Hamlet of any note and mark during the last five and thirty years. The true Hamlet I first saw when Fechter stepped on the stage. These words, if they merely expressed my own opinion, it is needless to say, would never have been written. But they express the opinion of every unprejudiced person under fifty years with whom I have met.”

Fechter's Hamlet was remarkable for its impetuosity, thus differing radically from the indecision and wavering which are characteristic of most conceptions of the part. In an article in the *Atlantic* (November, 1870), Kate Field argues in justification of this view, that the entire action of the play covers only ten days, whereas Richard Grant White held that it covered as many years. When, however, this article was reprinted in Miss Field's “Life of Fechter,” this argument was omitted.

Some of the peculiarities of Fechter's Hamlet are thus grouped together by Mr. Dutton Cook:

“It was the firm belief of Fechter's Hamlet, in defiance of general opinion to the contrary, that Queen Gertrude was Claudius's accomplice in the murder of

her husband. In the time of Fechter's Hamlet it was the fashion in Denmark to wear a medallion portrait, swinging from a gold chain, round the neck. Fechter's Hamlet wore thus a portrait of his father; the Queen wore a portrait of Claudius; Guildenstern was similarly adorned. Usually there is not a pin to choose between Rosencrantz and Guildenstern; the unfortunate gentlemen are alike odious to Hamlet, and they are slaughtered off the stage, at the instigation of the Prince, after they have been well murdered in the presence of the house by their histrionic representatives. But to Fechter's Hamlet, Rosencrantz was less hateful than Guildenstern: Rosencrantz wore no portrait around his neck. When Fechter's Hamlet spoke his first speech, and compared the late King to Hyperion, and Claudius to a satyr, he produced and gazed fondly at his father's picture; when he mentioned his uncle's 'picture in little,' he illustrated his meaning by handling the medallion worn by Guildenstern; in his closet-scene, he placed his miniature of his father side by side with his mother's miniature of Claudius; when at the close of their interview Gertrude would embrace her son, he held up sternly the portrait of his father; the wretched woman recoiled and staggered from the stage, and Hamlet reverentially kissed the picture as he murmured, 'I must be cruel to be kind.' In the play-scene, Fechter's Hamlet, when he rose at the discomfiture of Claudius, tore the leaves from the playbook and flung them in the air; in the scene with Ophelia, Fechter's Hamlet did not perceive that the King was watching them: had he known that he would have been so convinced of his uncle's guilt that the play would have been unnecessary. In the fourth act, if Fechter's Hamlet had not been well guarded, he would have killed the King then and there. In the last scene a gallery ran at the back of the stage, with short flights of stairs on either side, all exits and entrances being made by means of these stairs. Upon the confession of Laertes the King endeavored

to escape up the right-hand staircase ; Hamlet, perceiving this, rushes up the left-hand stairs and encountering Claudius in the centre of the gallery there dispatched him."

Other points in this great personation are elsewhere noted.

Charles Dickens, in the August *Atlantic* for 1869, wrote :

" Perhaps no innovation in art was ever accepted with so much favor by so many intellectual persons precommitted to, and preoccupied by, another system as Mr. Fechter's Hamlet. I take this to have been the case (as it unquestionably was in London), not because of its picturesqueness, not because of its novelty, not because of its many scattered beauties, but because of its perfect consistency with itself. As the animal painter said of his favorite picture of rabbits that there was more nature about those rabbits than you usually found in rabbits, so it may be said of Mr. Fechter's Hamlet that there was more consistency about that Hamlet than you usually found in Hamlets. Its great and satisfying originality was in its possessing the merit of a distinctly conceived and executed idea. From the first appearance of the broken glass of fashion and mould of form, pale and worn with weeping for his father's death, and remotely suspicious of its cause, to his final struggle with Horatio for the fatal cup, there were cohesion and coherence in Mr. Fechter's view of the character. Devrient, the German actor, had some years before in London fluttered the theatrical doves considerably, by such changes as being seated when instructing the players, and like mild departures from established usage ; but he had worn, in the main, the old nondescript dress, and had held forth, in the main, in the old way, hovering between sanity and madness. I do not remember whether he wore his hair crisply curled

short, as if he were going to an everlasting dancing master's party at the Danish court; but I do remember that most other Hamlets since the great Kemble had been bound to do so. Mr. Fechter's Hamlet, a pale, woe-begone Norseman with long flaxen hair, wearing a strange garb never associated with the part upon the English stage (if ever seen there at all), and making a piratical swoop upon the whole fleet of little theatrical prescriptions without meaning, or, like Dr. Johnson's celebrated friend, with only one idea in them, and that a wrong one, never could have achieved its extraordinary success but for its animation by one pervading purpose, to which all changes were made intelligently subservient. The bearing of this purpose on the treatment of Ophelia, on the death of Polonius, and on the old student fellowship between Hamlet and Horatio, was exceedingly striking; and the difference between picturesqueness of stage-effect, and for the elucidation of a meaning, was well displayed in there having been a gallery of musicians at the play, and in one of them passing on his way out, with his instrument in his hand, when Hamlet seeing it, took it from him to point his talk with Rosencrantz and Guildenstern."

George Henry Lewes, who wrote of Fechter when Fechter was at his best, and before he had been seen in this country at all, dwells upon his ability to properly represent the character in appearance: "He is lymphatic, delicate, handsome; and, with his long flaxen curls, quivering sensitive nostrils, fine eyes, and sympathetic voice, perfectly represents the graceful Prince. His aspect and bearing are such that the eye rests on him with delight." Mr. Lewes thought that Fechter excelled in the scenes which demand the qualities of an accomplished comedian, and it was only in the more tragic portions that any shortcoming was felt. "It is the

nearest approach that I have seen to the realization of Goethe's idea expounded in the celebrated critique in Wilhelm Meister, that there is a burden laid on Hamlet too heavy for his soul to bear."

Clement Scott says (in the London *Theatre*):

"Fechter broke down tradition, but he was not always intelligible. He was the first daring man who uttered his protest against the mouthing and ranting and bombastic school. But he could hardly speak the language and he was misunderstood. It required an intense sympathy with the reformer to adopt, without hesitation, the method of the reform. His idea struck home to the poetical mind, but it was caviare to the general public. A very educated palate indeed was required to swallow Fechter's Hamlet, even at his best."

And again:

"When Fechter played Hamlet at the Princess's Theatre the fight between the new school and the old became so furious that it was dangerous to approach the subject of the Frenchman's Hamlet at club or tavern; a fight that was only carried to a successful issue by the weight of the opinions of men like George Henry Lewes, who had the courage of their opinions, and who had seen acting in other countries than our own. Why, Fechter's Hamlet, and everything pertaining to Fechter would have been laughed off the stage, ridiculed, insulted and condemned had the old play-goer been allowed to have had entirely his own way."—*Theatre*, Nov., 1884.

George B. Woods, in *Old and New*, April, 1870:

"If anything is certain about Hamlet it is that he is princely, but this Prince forgets even to be a gentleman—often in his demeanor toward Polonius, very seriously in his treatment of Marcellus whom he brutally

snubs again and again merely because he is eager to speak with Horatio alone. If there is an established trait in Hamlet's character it is the 'infirmity of will and discontinuity of purpose,' which Mr. Lowell thinks he inherited from his frail mother. But here is a Hamlet as quick as Hotspur, as passionate as Romeo, whose doubt-crowded soliloquies are a constant contradiction to his ardor of temperament. But in the midst of all these most logical and incontrovertible objections, the critical spectator, unless he be a man of ice or fortified in a chain armor of prejudice, finds himself thrilled to his finger ends by some light touch of the actor; magnetized by a flitting gesture quick as light and illuminating a sentence with a meaning hitherto unsuspected; moved to tears by a tender or pathetic utterance; transfixed by a passionate exclamation, a word or look of scorn or love which lays the very heart of Hamlet beside the sympathetic heart of the spectator. No one can hear the tragedian hurl forth his epithets at the absent King like a succession of shots from a battery of artillery, 'Remorseless, treacherous, lecherous, kindless villain'; no one can watch the look which comes over his face as he parts from Ophelia, loving her with all the intensity of a fervid nature, angry at her part in spying upon him, driven by his destiny to crush her heart and his own; no one can see even so small a thing as the gesture by which he first reveals his hatred of the King; or the motion of his hand as he questions Horatio and the soldiers around him about the Ghost—and deny that he has greatness—greatness such as is given to few actors in a generation."



## Edwin Booth.

In the summer of 1852, while the elder Booth and his sons, Edwin (born 1833) and Junius Brutus, were playing an unsuccessful engagement in Sacramento, all three took benefits; Edwin, for his appearing as Jaffier in "Venice Preserved." The dress was a black velvet tunic. The elder Booth, moody and thoughtful as was his wont, exclaimed, after gazing at his son for some time: "You look like Hamlet; why don't you play it?" "Perhaps I may, if I should ever have another benefit," was the reply. The following November the father died. Edwin remained in California, a stock actor in his brother's company, playing everything from farce in a black face to Richard, Shylock and Macbeth. In these Shakspearian characters he had been received with much favor, and, finally, remembering the reply he had made to his father's suggestion, he did play Hamlet for his benefit, and for the first time in his life. It was his greatest success then, and it has since become, to quote Mr. Winter, "the part which has been the chief means of his development, his fortune, his fame, and the genuine, permanent and loving esteem in which he is held by the great body of his countrymen." Mr. Booth first played Hamlet in New York, at Burton's, in 1857. Beginning November 26, 1864, and ending March 24, 1865, he played the part at the Winter Garden, for 100 nights, at that time the longest run any Shakspearian play had ever enjoyed in America. Transferred to the Boston Theatre, it was played till the 14th of April, when the assassination of President Lincoln by John Wilkes Booth led his brother Edwin to immediate retirement from the

stage, with no expectation of ever again appearing in public. When, however, in response to the almost universal sentiment that he should not abandon his life-work because of the crime of another, he reappeared at the Winter Garden, January 3, 1866, it was in the same character of Hamlet, notwithstanding the fact that one paper in New York, standing by itself and for itself, pronounced it the drama of assassination. His reception was of the most enthusiastic nature.

On January 22, 1867, he was presented with the Hamlet medal, by a committee of distinguished citizens. Among those appearing on the stage at the presentation were Admiral Farragut, Admiral Palmer, Gen. Anderson—the hero of Fort Sumter; Gov. Hoffman, George Bancroft, Charles A. Dana, Albert Bierstadt, Richard O’Gorman and William Fullerton.

The praises of Booth’s Hamlet have been the subject of some of the most graceful pens in America. There is scarcely a magazine, review or newspaper of any literary pretensions that has not contained an article or articles of this kind, varying of course in the warmth of their admiration, but almost without exception eulogistic or commendatory.

George William Curtis, in the Easy Chair, *Harper’s Magazine*, April, 1865, says:

“What Garrick was in Richard III., or Edmund Kean in Shylock, we are sure Edwin Booth is in Hamlet. Booth looks the ideal Hamlet. For the Hamlet of our imaginations, which is the Hamlet of Shakspeare, is not the ‘scant of breath’ gentleman whom the severer critics insist that he should be. He is a sad, slight prince. Booth is altogether princely. His costume is still the solemn suit of sables, varied according to his fancy of greater

fitness, and his small lithe form, with his mobility and intellectual sadness of face and his large melancholy eyes satisfy the most fastidious imagination that this is Hamlet as he lived in Shakspeare's world. His playing throughout has an exquisite tone, like an old picture. It is not any particular scene, or passage, or look, or movement that conveys the impression; it is the consistency of every part with every other, the pervasive sense of the mind of a true gentleman sadly strained and jarred. Through the whole play the mind is borne on in mournful reverie. It is not so much what he says or does that we observe; for under all, beneath every scene and word and act, we hear what is not audible, the melancholy music of the sweet bells jangled, out of tune and harsh."

Mr. William Winter, who more than any other man has studied Booth in all his moods, says in *Harper's* for June, 1881:

"In former days his acting retained the exuberance of a youthful spirit, before the philosophic mind had checked the headlong currents of the heart or curbed imagination in its lawless flight. Even his Hamlet was touched with this elemental fire. Not alone in the great junctures of the tragedy—the encounters with the Ghost, the parting with Ophelia, the climax of the play-scene, the slaughter of poor old Polonius in delirious mistake for the King, and the avouchment to Laertes in the grave-yard—was he brilliant and impetuous, but in almost everything this quality of temperament showed itself, and here, of course, it was in excess. He no longer hurls the pipes into the flies when saying, 'Though you may fret me you cannot play upon me,' but he used to do so then, and the rest of the performance was of a piece with that part of it. He needed in that period of his development the most terrible passions to deal with. Pathos and spirituality and the

mountain air of great thought were yet to grow. His Hamlet was only dazzling, the glorious possibility of what it has since become. No person can be said to know Edwin Booth's acting who has not seen him play the same part several times. His artistic treatment, indeed, will generally be found adequate, but his mood or spirit will continually vary. He cannot, at will, command it, and when it is absent his performance seems cold. Standing on the lonely ramparts of Elsinore and with awe-stricken, preoccupied, involuntary glances questioning the star-lit midnight air, while he talks with his attendant friends, Edwin Booth's Hamlet is the simple and absolute realization of Shakspeare's haunted Prince, and leaves no room for inquiry, whether the Danes in the middle ages wore velvet robes or had long flaxen hair. It is dark, mysterious, melancholy, beautiful—a vision of dignity, and of grace, made sublime by suffering, made weird and awful by 'thoughts beyond the reaches of our souls.' Sorrow never looked more wofully and ineffably lovely than his sorrow looks in the parting scene with Ophelia, and frenzy never spoke with a wilder glee of horrid joy and fearful exultation than is heard in his tempestuous cry of delirium, 'Nay, I know not; is it the King?'"

The English critics did not receive Mr. Booth's Hamlet with such unqualified admiration as this. He received a cordial welcome there in 1880, but the critics did not find his personation faultless.

Mr. Clement Scott, of the *London Telegraph*, wrote as follows:

"He has a fine stage face, well cut, animated and intellectual, and an elastic walk; a poor and unattractive dress, contrasting by its dinginess with the gorgeous glitter of the court; tangled black hair, well off the face but hanging in feminine disorder down the back—this was Edwin Booth, who looked as if he had stepped out

of some old theatrical print in the days of elocution and before the era of natural and real acting. It was impossible to keep the attention off that remarkable face, that strange power of expression, those eyes that rolled and changed. It was a fascinating picture in spite of the poverty of the princely costume, and then it suddenly struck the attention: Is this Hamlet? Modern playgoers have seen two Hamlets of considerable weight—the tearful expression, the sadly reddened eyes, the pathetic prettiness of Fechter, and the dejected, unnerved and eminently poetical depression of Henry Irving. No one can say positively who is right or wrong.

“But when Mr. Booth, at his entrance, seizes the attention of the audience with that sharp and emphatic presence and those eyes that flash intelligence and say as much as the studied gesture, our thoughts revert to the text and we think of the veiled lids, the nighted color, the fruitful river in the eye, the dejected 'haviour of the visage; where are they in the Hamlet that stands before us? How can they be detected in this nervous physical strength, and this clear staccato manner? The play proceeds, scene after scene, and act after act, and the naturally ideal Hamlet seems omitted from the program. He never makes the blood course through the veins, warms the emotions or touches the sympathies. Our hearts are unreached. Gradually the attention was directed to Hamlet, the actor, and not Hamlet, the ideal. The contemplation of Hamlet from an intellectual point of view became too soon an impossibility. It was an actor's Hamlet, a Hamlet of point, a Hamlet built upon the teaching of old schools, and, as such, a very admirable Hamlet. The audience was at once fascinated by the clear and measured delivery of Mr. Booth. It was academical and correct to a fault. Not a word of the text escaped anybody or was lost. This was such a novelty that the great tirades and soliloquies received more than their accustomed praise and called down

extravagant enthusiasm. If we require nothing but the soft and moving delivery of the text of Hamlet, no one can do it better than Mr. Booth; but to modern ideas something more is wanted than a reading of Hamlet on the stage.

"The days of the old classical school are dead and buried, though let no one imagine that the new Hamlet ever bores his audience for five minutes. Mr. Booth is correct, but his manner is wanting in sympathy, in ideality and in persuasion. We are always thinking of the actor, never of the man. We are admiring the representative of the Prince of Denmark, but are not admitted into the *penetralia* of the philosophic mind of Hamlet. Up to the play-scene there were some happy, but never very impressive moments, and Mr. Booth does not waste time or patience in creating or elaborating striking business for effect. All has been rhetorical and neat, but, save at the end of Ophelia's scene and in the speech, 'What a rogue and peasant slave am I,' excitement has not been stirred. The play-scene is after all the test of both the mental and physical Hamlet. Here, strange to say, Mr. Booth made the least effect. The utterance was eminently measured, musical and incisive, but the manner was anything but typical and pictorial. The actor never lost himself in a scene, which is surely the climax of all Hamlet's hopes and ambitions, the confirmation of his doubts. But ideally considered, the scene was singularly cold. As in the scene with the players, so with the recorders there was a sly and suppressed humor.

"But Mr. Booth is far too orthodox a student to degrade his conception by mere point-making, and whatever may be said of his Hamlet, it does not contain one grain or trace of unworthy trifling or vulgarity. It is cold and classical to a fault, but nothing moves the artist from his unbending purpose. The scene with the mother failed in effect mainly because no effect was sought, and it was too late now to build up an ideal Hamlet. But

even from the standpoint of an actor's Hamlet, the words, 'Is it the King?' missed fire. The face was not illumined and the words hissed out, but Hamlet rushed across the stage to his mother, and screamed the words in a somewhat overstrained and melodramatic fashion. The reserve of the actor enabled him to do more than justice to the churchyard-scene, which tries the muscle of exhausted Hamlets. Here Mr. Booth revived wonderfully and interested the audience at a late hour. But the fencing and the death appeared to us to be singularly ill managed and ineffective, and the closing scene, having been robbed of all poetic significance, seemed to be commonplace."

Mr. J. Palgrave Simpson, in the *Theatre* (London) for December, 1880, says:

"Instead of being the slave of tradition, I found him constantly neglecting old traditional points, of which his manner after the play-scene, when his exultation would not give him time to wait until the crowd had wholly dispersed, was, perhaps, the most notable example, for effects which commended themselves better to his true matured intelligence. Another instance may be given in his delivery of the words, 'I'll rant as well as thou,' which were not howled and ranted as is commonly the case, but uttered with a profound contempt of the ranting of Laertes. To my mind, and especially on the second occasion of my witnessing his performance, Edwin Booth was eminently natural, and to be looked on as an admirable exponent of the more approved 'new school.'"

"Throughout he was the Prince, without any display of stilted dignity, but graceful in his courtesy and gentlemanly in his condescension. His charm of manner in this respect was especially to be remarked in the scenes with Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, in his excellently delivered and modestly reticent advice to the players, and in his scene with Osric, whom he treated

with the utmost courtesy, displaying his contempt of the fop in suppressed tones of voice, and playful by-play with Horatio, instead of anger or impatience. His exquisite tenderness toward Ophelia, to whom the words 'Go to a nunnery' were uttered as a warning voice of a man who really loved her, and not as indignant denunciation, was such as to reach every heart. The same may be said of the closet-scene with the Queen, in his display of filial forbearance, which was made as prominent as was consistent with the purpose of reproach."

Dutton Cook, in his "Nights at the Play," says:

"Altogether, so far as a first judgment after one hearing can be trusted, Mr. Booth's Hamlet is a spirited, elaborate, painstaking and expert, but conventional performance. He presents essentially the Hamlet of the stage with variations and embroideries of immaterial quality, and not the Hamlet of the student of Shakspeare. His chief aim is theatrical effectiveness of the old-fashioned sort. His Hamlet, in truth, may be said to be the Hamlet of the past. Often I found myself reminded of the Hamlet of Charles Kean; if I missed his physical demerits, I missed also his intensity, his special power of startling and kindling his audience. Something the Englishman (Irving) would gain if he could emulate the American's promptness, vigilance, decisiveness of manner, ease of action and freedom of limb. But, as I think, the Hamlet of Mr. Irving is to be preferred in that it is more picturesque, more poetic, more intellectually interesting and altogether more genuinely Shakspearian."

Mr. Booth's German critics were enthusiastic in his praise as will be seen by the following extracts from the German press, translated for the New York *Tribune* :

Oscar Welten in the *Tägliche Berliner Rundschau*.

"Booth is the best Hamlet I have ever seen. Neither Rossi, Devrient nor Barnay—not to mention the minor



celebrities — can be put on the same level with him. Joseph Wagner is perhaps the only one who can be compared with him, and Wagner is dead. Even he failed to make me understand Hamlet as the great American did. You can understand Booth perfectly even though you may not know a single word of what he utters. Here his essential power as an actor shows itself. In mobility of expression his countenance is extraordinary, almost unique. In Hamlet the scene with the flutes, as interpreted by him, was a masterpiece. The audience greeted it with a storm of applause. The play-scene was quite overwhelming in its effect. Booth's quick transition from wild laughter to choking agony is an achievement of startling power in the school of realistic æstheticism. His action in the passage that involves Yorick's skull may be noted as of kindred character. The vital treatment extends to the most minute details."

From the *Unterhaltungs-Blatt der Berliner Presse*.

"Here and there we should have liked more dramatic power, but this Hamlet is totally unlike any German Hamlet that ever we saw, and we are inclined to say that Edwin Booth is Hamlet by the grace of God and of Shakspeare — that a ray of the light which inspired the great Englishman in his creation has also inspired this actor. You may, if you like, wrangle over the interpretation of the character. Hamlet presents itself to the mind of every actor differently. A creation, immeasurable as the wide world, admits of the largest and most varied exposition. This granted, Booth is a phenomenal artist. He is the most sombre of all stage Hamlets; but his understanding of the part and the manner in which he evolves it are so full of light and clearness that all commentaries upon this difficult character appear superfluous. There is an infinite charm in the acting of this artist, so simple, so noble and free from all attempts at mere effect. Even in

moments of the highest passion he never oversteps the boundary lines of the beautiful. He is always 'every inch a king.' "

From the *Vossische Zeitung*.

"But how is it possible to enumerate in detail the striking, delicate, touching and charming points of this interpretation,—the irony toward Polonius, the interest in the grave-digger, the desperate hilarity during and after the play-scene, the deep pathos in the meeting with his mother,—which we regard as the climax of Booth's performance! A temperament of singular purity, features of infinite capacity for expression, a captivating voice (which only at minor points was not altogether free from mannerism), place the impersonations of Booth among the most attractive and life-like that could be conceived."

From the *Staatsbürger Zeitung*.

"Very unjustly, it appears, do we allow ourselves to be suspicious of works of art which originate in America. The 'puffing' by which, as a rule, they are heralded, repels us from them. Then, too, the impression which we derive from hearing of the materialistic tendencies of life in America and of the technical character of the culture which is said to dominate all minds in that country, is perplexing and well calculated to mislead. How can the eminently practical American, we ask,—he that is said to have ropes for nerves,—be in sympathy with the most subtle character that a poet ever created? The spiritual, sublimated Hamlet soul, with all its nervous, dream-like and melancholy attributes,—how can this be conceived by such a man?"

"For an answer, look at Edwin Booth. True, genuine, profound feeling it is which he brings into play, and which captivates and awakens our enthusiasm. He is guided by artistic instinct, he is free from all excesses, he is discreet, and always moves on the lines of true



EDWIN BOOTH.



beauty. Over all the passion that burns with consuming flame in his bosom, over all the dark despair of a brooding soul, rises still,—distinct and supreme,—the tender, gentle, perhaps bitter, but always refined melancholy of his dominant intellect. Mr. Booth's acting of Hamlet places him, among German interpreters of this character, at the side of Joseph Wagner and Emil Devrient. The latter—one of the most famous,—Booth seems to surpass in diversity and incisiveness. His wit and irony, in the scenes with Polonius and the courtiers, are quicker, and his manner toward Horatio, Ophelia and the mother is more winning."

From the *Berliner Fremdenblatt*.

"Booth seems to take the cue for his conception of Hamlet from the lines beginning the monologue: 'O that this too, too solid flesh would melt!' His spirit is rebellious against the cumbersome body, and ever desirous to 'shuffle off this mortal coil.' Throughout the almost death-like calm which pervades his being, a fiery longing to escape the burden imposed upon him by Fate seems to agitate the innermost recesses of his nature. Splendid outbursts of impassioned eloquence, prompted by this struggle, thrill the hearer's very soul. The wonderful play of Booth's face, and the soul-searching glances from the burning depths of his dark eyes, enthral the hearts of his auditors, even though the words he speaks may be in a language not familiar to all. The verdict of the public of Berlin agrees with that of all former judges of Mr. Booth's Hamlet in pronouncing it a masterpiece of the actor's genius, grand in its imposing quietude, towering above all his rivals in its passionate utterances and beautified into a stage-figure of fascinating proportions by the consummate grace of its representative.

"Of perfections there seem to be so many, of faults so few, that we do not know to what portion of the part as he renders it we should accord the most unqualified

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praise. Never did an actor succeed so admirably in painting alike the noble dignity and the exquisite humor of the philosophic Hamlet. And what shall I say of the fencing-scene,—that apotheosis of grace? Was ever more delightful play witnessed in any of our play-houses, by any one of our great actors, past or present? When has death been portrayed more faithfully yet less revoltingly? The curtain fell upon the most wonderful impersonation of Hamlet that Berlin has ever seen,—an impersonation in which dignified grace, exquisite humor, stupendous passion of delivery and the sublime power of genius were all blended. This Hamlet was not played, but *lived*. And so forever he will live in the memory of his enraptured listeners. Mr. Booth, amid spontaneous outbursts of applause, was called upon the scene, and at the close of the acts, no less than twenty-four times."

As among the latest and ripest opinions may be given that of William Winter, in the *New York Tribune*, November 5, 1889, at the time Mr. Booth was playing with Modjeska:

"Edwin Booth was never at any time inclined, when impersonating Hamlet, to employ those theatrical expedients that startle an audience, and diffuse nervous excitement. He shows himself to be less inclined to them than ever, now. Except at the delirious moment when the Prince rushes upon the arras and stabs through it the hidden spy whom he wildly hopes is the King, his acting was never diverted from that mood of intellectual self-concentration which essentially is the condition of Hamlet. In that moment his burst of frenzied eagerness—half horror, and half-exultant delight—liberated the passion that smoulders beneath Hamlet's calm, and it was irresistibly enthralling. There were indications of the same passion in the delivery of the soliloquy upon the artificial grief of the player, at the climax of

the play-scene, and in the half-lunatic rant over Ophelia's grave. But these variations only served to deepen the darkness of misery with which his embodiment of Hamlet is saturated, and the gloomy grandeur of the haunted atmosphere in which it is swathed.

"Now, as always hitherto, Edwin Booth's ideal of Hamlet is an entirely noble person overwhelmed with a fatal grief, which he endures for the most part with a patient sweetness that is deeply pathetic, but which sometimes drives him into delirium and must inevitably cause his death. In his expression of this ideal, which is true to Shakspeare, he has never yet gone as far as Shakspeare's text would warrant. He has never yet allowed his votaries to see Hamlet as Ophelia saw him, in that hour of eloquent revelation when—without artifice and in the unpremeditated candor of involuntary sincerity—his ravaged and blighted figure stood before her in all the pitiable disorder of self-abandoned sorrow. To show Hamlet in that way would be to show him exactly as he is in Shakspeare; but in a theatrical representation that expedient, while it might gratify the few, would certainly repel the many. Real grief is not attractive, and the grief of Hamlet is real; it is not simply a filial sorrow for the death of his beloved father; a mournful shame at his mother's hasty marriage with his uncle; an affliction of the haunted soul because it knows that his father's spirit is condemned to fast in fires and to walk the night. It is deeper than all these. It is an elemental misery, coëxistent with his being; coincident with his conviction of the utter fatuity of all this world and with his mental paralysis of comprehension, awe-stricken and half insane, in presence of the unfathomable misery that environs man's spiritual life. Entirely and literally to embody the man whose nature is convulsed in this way would be to oppress an audience with what few persons understand and most persons deem intolerable,—the reality of sorrow. Hamlet upon the stage must be interesting, and, in a certain sense, he

must be brilliant; and Edwin Booth has also made him so. But this noble actor, so fine in his intuitions, so just in his methods, cannot be otherwise than true to his artistic conscience. He embodies Hamlet not simply as the picturesque and interesting central figure in a story of intrigue, half amatory and half political, in an ancient royal court, but as the representative type of man at his higher point of development, vainly contrasting the darkness and doubt that enshroud him in this weak, pain-stricken, transitory, mortal state, and (because his vision is too comprehensive, his heart too tender and his will too weak for the circumstances of human life) going to his death at last, broken, dejected, baffled, a mystery among mysteries, and a complete and disastrous failure, but glorious through it all, and infinitely more precious to those who even vaguely comprehend his drift, than the most successful man that ever was drawn.

"Treating Hamlet in this spirit Edwin Booth is not content merely to invest him with symmetry of form, poetry of motion, statuesque grace of pose, and the exquisite beauty of musical elocution, and to blend these gracious attributes with dignity of mind and spontaneous and unerring refinement of temperament and manner. He goes much further, because he illumines the whole figure with a tremulous light of agonized vitality. This is the true Hamlet, in whose bosom burns the fire that is not quenched."

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#### EDWIN BOOTH AS HAMLET.

[A. S. in New York *Telegram*.]

THE curtain rises. This is Elsinore,  
And this the noble Dane;  
The long, long centuries have backward rolled,  
And Hamlet lives again:  
He lives in all his beauty and his grace,  
A man—a king 'mong men;  
His great dark eyes, and haughty, clear-cut face  
Shine on us now as then.



He moves us by his genius and his power  
 To smiles or tears at will;  
 We listen to his voice,—that thrilling voice,  
 I seem to hear it still:  
 Our souls are stirred with pity at his grief,  
 Our eyes with tears grow dim,  
 And as he weaves his spell around us here  
 Our hearts go out to him.

Oh, fair Ophelia! happy woman thou  
 For but one hour to be;  
 Even though it brought thee pain and early death,  
 Beloved by such as he:  
 Ah, well, when years have passed above my head,  
 And stolen my youth away,  
 Some other maid may actor praise or blame,  
 Then I, with truth, shall say:—

There is no actor living now, my child,  
 Like him who in my youth,  
 Did tread the stage, and bear away the palm;  
 There's none like Edwin Booth:  
 A man of generous heart, noble and true,  
 His life was good and pure;  
 He won and kept the homage of the rich,  
 The blessings of the poor."

### Tommaso Salvini.

Salvini (born 1833), the greatest living actor of what may be called the barbaric rôles, has never made the impression in Hamlet that he has in some characters.

George Henry Lewes wrote of him, in 1875:

"It was not Shakspeare's Hamlet, one must admit; the many-sidedness of that strange character was sadly truncated; the wit, the princely gaiety which momentarily plays over the abiding gloom, the vacillating infirmity of purpose, the intellectual over-activity were conspicuous by their absence. Nevertheless, I think, of all the Hamlets I have seen, Salvini's is the least disappointing. The scenes with the Ghost erred, I think, psychologically in depicting physical terror, but this is the universal defect, and Salvini's terror was finely expressed. The soliloquies were quiet and were real soliloquies, except that every now and then too much was italicized, and

painted out, so that he seemed less one communing with himself than one illustrating his meaning to a listener."

*London Athenæum* (1875):

"No actor of our day has brought to the part of Hamlet equal intelligence and mastery of art, equal ripeness of judgment and perfection of method. The world has seen Hamlets in which the execution was masterly while the conception was so weak as to be dishonoring to Shakspeare. Such was, in some respects, the Hamlet of Fechter. No charge of this kind can be brought against Signor Salvini. His Hamlet is fine in conception; the only room for doubt is whether it is in all respects the Hamlet Shakspeare drew. His bearing before the Ghost; his manner of watching the King during the play-scene; his delirium as he throws into the air the loose leaves of his manuscript he has kept during the performance; his treatment of his mother; his recoil upon the reëpearance of his father; his duel with Laertes, and his dying scene with the keen craving of a weak nature for those demonstrations of human sympathy which stronger spirits would scorn,—are splendid proofs of the combination of intellectual capacity and physical means."

### Henry Irving.

Henry Irving (1838), while in the stock company at the Theatre Royal, Manchester, first played Hamlet, June 20, 1864, for his benefit. October 31, 1874, he first appeared in Hamlet, in London, an event for which the crowd began to assemble around the entrance to the pit of the Lyceum at three o'clock in the afternoon. His success was so great in this character that he gave it 200 consecutive representations, the run ending June 29, 1875.

Says Brereton, his biographer :

"He wore no elaborate trappings or funeral velvet, no flaxen wig like that adopted by Charles Fechter ; the order of the Danish elephant was absent. He appeared simply as a man and a prince, clothed in thick-ribbed silk, and a paletôt edged with fur, a rich but simple costume, relieved only by a massive gold chain. His face wore a troubled, wearied expression ; the disordered black hair was carelessly thrown over the forehead, and the marvelous eye of the actor told of his distracted mind. But so subtle was the actor's art, so daring his originality, that almost two acts of the play were allowed to pass in silence before the audience began to understand him. After the scene with the Ghost, Mr. Irving came off the stage depressed, not by the silence of the audience, but by the thought that he had not reached his ideal. To use his own words, 'I felt that the audience did not go with me until the first meeting with Ophelia, when they changed toward me entirely.' From this point in the play his personation was recognized as the most human Hamlet that the audience had ever known, and the delighted spectators were loud in their applause, even at a quarter to one in the morning.

"Henry Irving shows a Hamlet of a highly nervous and sensitive disposition ; a student, an artist, and a gentleman, born to great things, happy in the love of his parents and the confident attachment of a young and guileless woman, who, by a sudden turn of extraordinary misfortune, is forced to take arms against a sea of troubles. The terrible events which occur have the effect of unhinging the man's mind, but have no power to alter his nature. He is overwhelmed, he is distressed, he is irritable, he is reflective, he talks to himself, the strain on the nervous system is almost too great for human nature to bear, but nothing can alter the inherent disposition of Hamlet. He must always be a gentleman, he must always be soft and tender to women ; when he sees Ophelia, his clouded face is illumined with the sun

of passion; when they allude to his mother as contradistinct from his uncle, Hamlet rises from his seat—the refined gentleman. More than this, it is impossible for Hamlet to be cruel, wilfully and deliberately. He is too sensitive, too highly cultured and too feminine in his essence. There is nothing whatever cruel in the nature of Hamlet as illustrated by Henry Irving. He can do terrible things when irritated to madness, when he is set upon, trapped and abused; but, like many of us, he cannot be desperate unless he is in a passion; he cannot fight in cold blood; he is ever meditating, planning, arguing, soliloquizing, and discussing his plan of action. But he cannot screw his courage to the sticking point. He has not a Lady Macbeth by his side to urge him on to murder. He has no one but his conscience, and arguments with conscience are seldom decisive. He can become bitterly satirical to Ophelia when he discovers the infamous plot to which she has lent herself, and when he knows he is being watched from behind the arras. He can be excessively rude to Rosencrantz and Guildenstern when he discovers that their friendship is a gross deception and a snare. He can kill Polonius when he is urged to desperation, and when the curtain will hide his eyes from the murder; but he cannot kill the King at his prayers, and can only accomplish it when Hamlet is an actor in a murderous scene of bloodshed, and must per force take his man with the rest. Higher even than this Hamlet's hatred of cruelty is his intense heart. Probably no Hamlet who has yet appeared, so thoroughly brought out, as Mr. Irving did, the love for Ophelia, the devotion to his mother, and the warm attachment to his friend Horatio." [These three points were specially strong with Fechter.]

On becoming the lessee of the Lyceum Theatre, Mr. Irving produced Hamlet as the opening attraction (December 30, 1878), Miss Ellen Terry then playing



WILSON BARRETT.



Ophelia for the first time. It ran for 108 nights and was one of the best productions, certainly so far as scenery and minor parts was concerned, that the tragedy has ever had. "The performance you have seen to-night," said Mr. Irving, after the curtain had fallen, "has been the dream of my life."

### Wilson Barrett.

Wilson Barrett played Hamlet at the Princess's Theatre, London, of which he was the manager, October 16, 1884, and, owing to many innovations, the performance elicited considerable discussion. A fundamental difference from the preceding Hamlets was in changing the age of the Prince, who is usually assumed to be about thirty, to ten years younger.

#### *Dramatic Notes, October, 1884:*

"Mr. Barrett's Hamlet is a quick, impetuous piece of acting, and if we are to accept Hamlet, as being nearer twenty than thirty years of age, it is a fine rendering of the character. But the sad, dreamy, poetical Hamlet is lost sight of in Mr. Barrett's terribly earnest, determined and youthful hero. In many respects his Hamlet is like Charles Mayne Young's, one of the most popular Hamlets at the beginning of the century. Young's great hits were made in the play-scene and in the fencing-bout, where his nature was better suited than in the scenes with Ophelia and his mother. These lacked tenderness and were given with a great show of irritability that was bad in contrast to the pathos and tenderness of previous Hamlets in them. His Hamlet was, as is Mr. Barrett's, fiery and impetuous. Mr. Barrett has given to the stage, for the first time, the tragedy as Shakspeare wrote it, in as perfect a form as is possible, within the limits of the stage."

Clement Scott, in the *Theatre*, November, 1884:

"To sum up. It is an admirable, clever, vigorous, rapid and eminently unstagy performance, destitute of trick, full, eloquent and unconventional; but it starts no tears to the eyes and causes no pulsation to the heart. I was carried along; I had no time to think, so rapid was the actor's manner, but I was unmoved throughout. I wondered, but I was not stirred. My interest was excited, but never my imagination."

### Ernesto Rossi.

Rossi (1829), the Italian actor who visited this country in 1881-2, is believed to have done more to make popular the play of Hamlet in Italy, Spain, Portugal and South America than any other actor, and he is without question one of the most remarkable representatives of the title rôle. The critics differed in this country as to his exact standing, the believers that only an English-speaking Hamlet can possibly act the character, doing him scant justice, to say the least. Others saw a wonderful piece of acting, and not a few believe that he is to-day the best of all the living Hamlets. Two totally dissimilar views are here given:

Mr. A. C. Wheeler (Nym Crinkle) says:

"Much as I liked his Othello and his Romeo, his Hamlet was, to my thinking, even superior in intelligent grasp of the subject, in harmonious and effective picturing of the character, and in the vivid, earnest and beautiful illustration that it received in what is technically called the stage-business. Signor Rossi's Hamlet is a sad, reflective Prince, but the actor does not, therefore, make him a mooning, semi-idiot. He is full of the impulses and desires of hot blood, but his purpose is irresolute. He will have none of the dreaming,



spooning, whining, maundering, moon-calfing treatment of the text. He acts it like a man living in an age of intense physical action, and not like a poet just out of the *Waverley Magazine*. When he questions Heaven in the 'to be or not to be' soliloquy, it is not the plaint of a weak sensibility, but the interrogation of a strong intellect that comes of strong blood. When he meets the ghost of his father, he meets with a shock—all the superstition, all the love, all the humanity of him escape in a wild piercing cry. And while listening to it, he is torn by every appeal, dismayed by every revelation and agonized by every charge, for he is wholly man. But all through this scene he preserves the air of awe and reverence.

"Its merit as a piece of acting compares with the other Hamlets that we have had lately as a torso of Raphael's compares with a face of Daubigny's. In one are all the infinite details that give character to flesh. The inner soul seems to come through it in its thousand shifting half shadows. In the other is the smooth blandness of mere color without anatomy. In his treatment of Ophelia, his tenderness was dashed with a sadness that was peculiarly effective. And in the picture-scene with his mother, he gave melodramatic energy to the scene by dashing the miniature under his feet in a paroxysm of contempt and rage. It was so well done; was so natural in its forcefulness and graceful in its motions that the house broke out with applause.

"The killing of the King was not at all to the taste of the English tradition-keepers. It was too pictorial, too much like real killing, which realism is not poetry, according to the purists."

Mr. William Winter says:

"Most persons, certainly, whatever may be the reason, prefer their Melancholy Dane without a superabundance of adipose tissue. Signor Rossi, like the late Mr. Fechter, presents him in a state of bulk that is almost rubicund;

and, also like the late Mr. Fechter, he invests him with a prodigious impetuosity of temperament, such as must have terminated the dynasty of uncle Claudius in considerably less time than it takes to read the play. Aside from these qualifications—which mean that he neither looks like Hamlet nor assumes the spirit of Hamlet—Signor Rossi gives, under this name, a piece of melodramatic acting which is remarkably brilliant, and which, to an audience of Italians, must be at least usefully suggestive of the great and wonderful original of Shakespeare. The character of Hamlet, as it stands in the English language, is an ideal of mournful beauty, a type of perfect nobleness in man, and of supreme exaltation in state, but blighted by affliction and grief, dazed and partly demented by the strong and terrible shock of a supernatural visitation, and overwhelmed by the stern pressure of a fearful duty—to which not only a distressing experience but innate incertitude and a purposeless, fitful, bewildered, agonized spirit render the faculties inadequate. Such a personality is easily imagined, but it is not easily embodied. Good Hamlets, if it were, would be as thick on the stage as bananas on the stem, and, happily, there would be no further call for the discussion of a tiresome subject. But the problem for the actor is here unspeakably difficult. He must conquer, not by deed but by condition; not by what he does, but by what he is. The Hamlet spirit—the introspective, brooding, infinitely dejected, pathetic spirit of a great mind overwhelmed by the mystery of the universe, and by the strange, forlorn state of man, and contemplative of suicide before yet anything has occurred that is at all unusual in human experience—must shine through him, to dominate and enthral. That being present, the rest is a natural sequence. That being absent, the rest is mere soulless mechanics. The observer of Signor Rossi's Hamlet sees, in the thing that is done, not a man of dreams and visions, but a man of resolute will and spirited activity. This may be an excellent Italian ideal,

but it is not English, and it is not Shakspeare; nor is the essential falseness of the ideal redeemed, for an English-speaking audience, by Signor Rossi's incontestably brilliant display of technical proficiency. In brief, Signor Rossi applied realism to poetry, and realism applied to Hamlet is a desecration of all art and all propriety. In comparison with this Hamlet, the elderly and antique Hamlets of Barry Sullivan and William Creswick become positively noble, while that of the late E. L. Davenport towers into sublimity."

### *And Others.*

There have been many Hamlets of whom only brief mention can be made. One who was much admired in this country, and who is still remembered and believed by many to be one of the best ever seen upon the stage, was E. L. Davenport. Less attention was paid to his delineation than to others less worthy, and the record in regard to it is far from being full or satisfactory. In August, 1875, he played the part at the Grand Opera House, in New York, Barry Sullivan appearing in the same character at Booth's Theatre, on the same evenings. Mr. Sullivan is an Irish actor, and an attempt was made on the part of his managers to arouse a national feeling in his behalf. His Hamlet was in striking contrast to the gentle, scholarly personation of Davenport. Lawrence Barrett has frequently played Hamlet in years gone by, giving it a restless, spirited and rapid turn, not generally accepted as the ideal Dane. He has played every male part in Hamlet except Polonius, and First Grave-digger. Mr. Hutton says Barrett has played Laertes to the Hamlet of Charlotte Cushman, the Ghost to Edwin Booth and Davenport,

Horatio to Murdoch, etc. Edwin Adams was a satisfactory Hamlet of a few years ago. Frank Mayo has an excellent conception of the part. Louis James and Robert Mantell have recently aspired to the character. Among foreigners who have played Hamlet in New York and elsewhere, in this country, are to be mentioned Bandmann, Bogumil-Dawson, Barnay and Hasse.

Another quotation from William Winter is in order here :

"Stage-experience has long ago settled that unless even the best of actors has peculiar fitness for Hamlet he should not undertake it. Technical proficiency does not suffice. In this part, of all others, "the many fail, the one succeeds." George Frederick Cooke, a great Richard, must have been, for physical reasons, offensive in Hamlet; Forrest, a great Othello, was one of the most obnoxious Hamlets ever seen. The elder Booth's Hamlet never stood out like his Richard and Sir Giles. John McCullough—matchless in the heroic parts, and the finest Virginius since Macready—always seemed constrained and at self-variance, in the Melancholy Dane. Hazlitt, as readers know, complains that even the great Kemble (that majestic figure in Sir Thomas Lawrence's picture!) acted him like a man in armor. Yet these are the names of giants in the annals of the stage. The lesson thus implied is not without significance. Though it be true that Hamlet must be made, it is first of all essential that he should be born."

And a writer in the *New York Sun* says :

"There have been many who have played Hamlets, from Garrick down to Anna Dickinson; but who can be Hamlet, or ever was Hamlet? Who can think, dream, study, learn, love and smile, rejoice or sorrow, in proportion as the passing hour is in harmony with his ideal

of heaven and of humanity, as he does? But of the conventional Hamlets as they have been, Mr. Booth appears to us the best of our time. He may not carry out the traditions of Garrick's Hamlet; he is not the sensible and lonely Hamlet of Kemble, nor the Hamlet of polished perception and melodious elocution of Young, nor the Hamlet of Devrient, who, perhaps, grasped the ideal of Hamlet more closely than any actor of his time; but to us he is far the best of our time. Though Fechter, with his fair flaxen wig, full figure, and tearful visage, came nearer being the real Hamlet, as he is pictured, Mr. Booth, with his pale, handsome presence, round which a poetic perfume hangs, his brilliant eye, his sad and thoughtful air, his graceful carriage and gracious mien, seems to us to realize more than any of the Hamlets of our time, or perhaps even except Devrient, of the past, many men's, and especially women's, fancy Hamlet."

The first recorded performance of Hamlet in America, was in Philadelphia, July 27, 1759, Lewis Hallam in the title rôle (Seilhamer's "History of the American Theatre"). Mr. Douglass played the Ghost, Mrs. Harman, Ophelia. The first recorded performance in New York was November 26, 1761; Mr. Hallam as Hamlet, Mr. Douglass as the King, Mr. Quelch as the Ghost, and Mrs. Morris as Ophelia.

Mr. Laurence Hutton, in "A Century of Hamlet," published in *Harper's Magazine*, mentions the following actors who are known to have played the part in New York in the hundred years preceding November 26, 1861:

"Thomas Abthorpe Cooper, James Fennell, John Howard Payne (the first American-born Hamlet), Edmund Kean, Junius Brutus Booth, George Holman,

James William Wallack, Robert Campbell Maywood, John Jay Adams, William Augustus Conway, Thomas Hamblin, William Charles Macready, John R. Duff, Charles Kemble, Charles Kean, Edwin Forrest, Edward Eddy, John McCullough, George Vandenhoff, Edwin L. Davenport, Barry Sullivan, McKean Buchanan, Charles Carroll Hicks, James E. Murdoch, Edwin Booth, Lawrence Barrett, William Abbott, Augustus A. Addams, J. R. Anderson, George J. Arnold, Mr. Barton, Mr. Bartow, Frederick Brown, John H. Clarke, Mr. Clason, Henry J. Finn, W. C. Forbes, Richard Graham, H. P. Grattan, James H. Hackett, Henry Erskine Johnstone, William Horace Keppell, H. Loraine, W. Marshall, J. A. J. Neafie, John R. Oxley, William Pelby, Charles Dibdin Pitt, J. B. Roberts, John R. Scott, James Stark, Henry Wallack, Wilmarth Waller."

Since the days of the boy-actresses it has not been recorded that any man has attempted to play Ophelia, but the instances where women have donned the inky cloak of Hamlet are many. Most, if not all, these attempts have been ill-advised. The character is not better suited to woman than is that of Richard III. or of Iago, of which there are also recorded instances of female ambition to fill. Charlotte Cushman, who from her masculine temperament played Romeo fairly well, essayed Hamlet, but there is no recorded success for her in the character. Where she failed others might well take warning, but there are on the list of female Hamlets the following: Eliza Shaw, Fanny Wallack, Charlotte Barnes, Clara Fisher, Miss Marriott, Emma Waller, Susan Denin, Mrs. F. B. Conway, Julia Seaman, Winnetta Montague, Adele Belgarde, Louise Pomeroy, Anna Dickinson.

William Winter :

"Charlotte Cushman used to play Hamlet, but even Charlotte Cushman only played it once in a while, and never was esteemed in it as more than a curiosity. For abnegation of sex her Cardinal Wolsey, and not her Hamlet, is the work to be remembered. Eliza Shaw was better in it, but still better out of it, and made her fame as a woman and not a man. Charlotte Barnes, with her frail physique and mournful, wandering eyes, languished through it with tolerable effect. Stalwart Miss Marriott stalked about in it and was gloomily comic. Miss Julia Seaman made a jack-knife effort with it on one ghastly night at Booth's Theatre a few years ago. And it is not very long since the Melancholy Dane was more melancholy than usual in the exhibition made of him at Niblo's Garden by Miss Belgarde. Alas, poor Hamlet! It was a bad day for the glass of fashion when the essayists began to call him 'feminine' and the ladies found it out."

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### HAMLET ON THE FRENCH STAGE.

Hamlet has occasionally been played on the French stage, although it can scarcely be considered adapted to the national taste. It was performed in Paris in 1847, and again twenty years later. In 1886 it had two representations in the gay capital, one at the Porte Saint Martin, by Sarah Bernhardt who played Ophelia, M. Garnier appearing in the title rôle.

Joseph Knight thus speaks of it:

"The play opens with the court-scene; the traditions of the English stage, so far as dressing is concerned, are closely followed. Polonius is a garrulous and cheerful old gossip, caring less for his dignity than

for a hearing, and completely enamored of his own wit. Garnier is a handsome, well-built, manly fellow enough, with blonde hair *à la* Fechter, and with an easy bearing and picturesque appearance. Like his predecessor Fechter, M. Garnier mistakes Hamlet for an amorous *jeune premier*. No such insight as was displayed by Fechter, is shown, however, and the performance lacks the beauty, gallantry and color which in Fechter disposed one to pardon the absence of any adequate conception of the character. M. Garnier, in fact, is not Hamlet at all. In the scenes with Ophelia he is at times tender; in the presence of the Ghost he bears himself with a fair show of filial reverence; Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are treated with a certain measure of sarcasm; the King in the play-scene is glared at with sufficient ferocity, and the Queen is sufficiently lectured with exemplary indignation. So the performance progresses until a poorly fought duel and a grotesque slaughter of the King brings to an end an impersonation respectable as a display of physical resources, but otherwise of no account."

Mr. Knight, while acknowledging the art of Bernhardt in her rendition of Ophelia, does not think highly of the conception, and considers the representation, from the English stand-point, a failure. The more striking features of her treatment of the character are noted elsewhere. The version used was by MM. Cressonnois and Samson. It omitted the advice of Hamlet to the players, and cut out Osric; Hamlet does not follow the Ghost, but Horatio and Marcellus withdraw; in the Queen's chamber the full-length panel picture of the dead King becomes endowed with life and glides across the room as the Ghost. Ophelia is carried in person on her bier, and the play closes with the appearance of



Fortinbras, who has not been seen on the English-speaking stage these many years.

The Hamlet produced a little later the same year at the Theatre Français (Sept. 28), was the older version of the elder Dumas and Paul Meurice, altered by the survivor, Meurice. The original idea of the adapters was to improve on Shakspeare by changing the ending so as to make Hamlet escape the ordeal untouched by the poisoned foil, and as the others were expiring, the Ghost once more made his appearance. He pardoned his wife, but consigned the guilty King to the lower regions. Then Hamlet, confessing his want of firmness, asked his father what punishment was in store for him, to which the Ghost replied, "*Tu vivras*," and the curtain fell. In the revival, however, this ending was omitted. The play opened on the platform of the castle. After Horatio makes his revelation about the Ghost to Hamlet, the latter recovers from his amazement sufficiently to have a little flirtation with Ophelia, through an interpolation of the French, concluding with a formal declaration of love, and handing to her the sonnet, "Doubt thou the stars are fire?" The cast in the principal part was as follows: Hamlet, Mounet-Sully; Polonius, Got; Horatio, Baillet; King, Silvain; Ghost, Maubant; Grave-digger, Coquelin; Ophelia, Mlle. Reichemberg; Queen, Mme. Agar.

Edmund Yates:

"It has been my fate during a life of play-going to see a good deal of Hamlet. My memory recalls Charles Kean, a somewhat sulky and savage young prince, but full of dignity and with many fine touches of tragic power; James Wallack, light and airy, with an inclination to slap the Ghost on the back, and make the best

of the late King's unfortunate ending; Walter Montgomery, virulent but vulgar, energetic but decidedly provincial; McKean Buchanan, a very tall American, the first, in my recollection, to give the reading a hawk from a heron—psshaw! though I see Barry Sullivan claims it; Barry Sullivan himself, closely studied on the old models, intelligent, effective; G. V. Brooke, a magnificent declaimer, but ponderous and porter-y; a number of stock tragedians of whom nothing need be said. Then Fechter, the very pride and pearl of poetry, fair-haired, impassioned, sounding every note in the gamut of love, hate, revenge, scorn, filial reverence and desperate frenzy, but with an impossible accent which went well-nigh to rob the indubitably great creation of its charm; Henry Irving, scholarly, most artistic, most interesting. Also did I see that extraordinary performance, such a strange vagary on the part of poor J. M. Bellew, who stood at a desk before the proscenium and declaimed the speeches of all the characters in turn, while the persons of the drama, mere human marionettes, trod the stage with appropriate gestures, and moved their lips as though they were speaking. I thought this the most ludicrous thing I had ever witnessed. I do not think so now: I have seen '*Amlate*—as they pronounce it—at the Français.

"*Ah, ce pauvre Schak-is-père!* He has a little line on the bill and in the book, but fades into insignificance beside the type allotted to Alexandre Dumas and Paul Meurice, who are set forth as the authors of the play. It will be scarcely credited of gentlemen undertaking the task of translation that they are absolutely ignorant of the meaning of the word 'canon', confounding it with 'cannon', and that they render the line, 'Or that the Everlasting had not fixed His canon 'gainst self-slaughter,' thus:

" 'Ou si le suicide, insulte à l'Eternel.'

" 'Ne devait pas de compte à la foudre du ciel,'  
as though speaking of the action of a heavenly eighty-

ton gun. Hamlet's exclamation, 'Well said, old mole,' on hearing the Ghost's voice bidding his companions 'swear,' has evidently puzzled the authors. But they meet the difficulty by making the voice heard, first on the extreme right then on the extreme left of the stage, as though the majesty of buried Denmark were literally a mole burrowing his way through the earth; the courtiers follow the sound and Hamlet says, '*Tu fais du chemin, taupel!*'

"The lines,

'Cut off even in the blossoms of my sin,  
Unhousel'd, disappointed, unanel'd,  
No reckoning made, but sent to my account  
With all my imperfections on my head,'

are rendered :

'Et, pécheur, je mourns sans prêtre, sans prière,  
*Sans extrême-onction*, sans regard en arrière,  
Et comparus, devant le Seigneur *irrité*,  
Chargé de tout le poids de mon iniquité.'

Thus, throughout do the noble lines come forth limp, attenuated, flat and almost unrecognizable :

"How now? a rat!  
Dead, for a ducat, dead,"

is

"Mort, je parie!  
Un ducat, qu'il est mort!"

When the Ghost summons Hamlet on the platform and Horatio says :

'It beckons you to go away with it,  
As if it some impartment did desire  
To you alone,'

we find

'Du doigt il vous appelle, et *semble avoir affaire*  
A parler à vous seul.'

"M. Mounet-Sully, who plays Hamlet, is a stout, well-proportioned, middle-aged man, with long dark hair, large mobile features and eyes full of expression, save when under the influence of excitement, he squints horribly. Intelligent, certainly, graceful in his way, but in all his 'Frenchified' exaggeration, his ranting, his moaning, his cries, his gesticulation *Fechtero ipso Fech-*

*terius*. At the end of his interview with the Ghost, he faints and rolls on his back; he is constantly running on and off the stage, rolling his eyes like the toy Turk, covering and uncovering his head and 'fidgeting' generally. Some of the obvious points he misses or slurs over. For instance, when Hamlet has killed Polonius, and asks, 'Nay, I know not; is it the King?' which Kean, springing from the back of the stage, and gaining his mother's side at one bound, delivered in a hoarse whisper — M. Sully, never changing his easy attitude, casually inquires, '*Serait-ce pas le Roi ?*' as though it were not a matter of much moment. Some of the great soliloquies he gives intelligently, but he is obviously more at home in the melodramatic portions of the play, *e. g.*, his love-making to Ophelia, which is of the exalted *boulevardier* type, and his references to '*ma mère*:'

'Que ma mère, O mon Dieu ! soit ma mère toujours !'

a sentiment, which, come where it may, never fails to move a French audience almost to tears. Mlle. Reichenberg's Ophelia, though probably more after Dumas's idea than Shakspeare's, is very pretty, and she speaks with great purity and clearness, and is charming to look at; but an *ingénue*, after all, and not Ophelia. The best played part is Polonius, by M. Got, who is now, probably, the finest actor in the world, and whose representation of courtly senility is simply perfect. I doubt whether Polonius wore a gold pince-nez similar to that with which M. Got adorns himself when preparing to read Hamlet's verses to his daughter, and whether Hamlet himself, in the play-scene flourished such a one-franc Palais Royal fan as M. Sully wields. The King and Queen, who are always disagreeable people, were here particularly offensive; the King a *farouche* savage with a golden bee-hive on his head, looked as if the 'toasts joyeux' for which he declared his predilection had given him the *vin triste*, while the lady representing the Queen gave full prominence to the amorous inclinations of that elderly sinner."

A COMPARISON  
OF  
DIFFERENT PERFORMANCES  
OF  
HAMLET.



HAZLITT: *Hamlet is probably of all others the most difficult to personate on the stage. It is like the attempt to embody a shadow.*

LEWES: *Hamlet is the easiest of all Shakspeare's great parts for an actor of moderate ability.*

HACKETT: *John Kemble is reported to have declared that he studied Hamlet seven years before he acted it; and, although he had then played it thirty years, every time he repeated it, something new in it struck him.*

EDWIN BOOTH: *He [Hamlet] is the epitome of mankind, not an individual; a sort of magic mirror in which all men and women see the reflex of themselves, and therefore has his story always been, is still, and will ever be the most popular of stage tragedies.*

HORACE HOWARD FURNESS: *Upon no throne built by mortal hands has ever "beat so fierce a light" as upon that airy fabric reared at Elsinore.*









ELLEN TERRY AS "OPHELIA."

## SCENE FIRST.

The (London) *Theatre*: In the first scene, as Hamlet was produced at the Lyceum Theatre, London, in 1878-9, and as in Mr. Taylor's arrangement of the play brought out at the Crystal Palace in 1873, the Ghost made his appearance, not in a front scene, but on the battlements of the castle.

Kate Field: In pre-Fechterian days Horatios senselessly crossed the Ghost's path, as if such a step would stay its progress. Not so with Mr. Fechter, whose Horatio made the sign of the cross, at which the Ghost stopped as a Catholic ghost should. Once interpreted thus, intelligence exclaims, "Of course," and yet Horatios have been crossing the stage for three hundred years.

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## COURT-SCENE.

THE ELDER BOOTH (Gould): He was not merely sad, but stricken in grief, at the sudden and mysterious death of his father. He is stung by instinctive suspicion of his uncle. He is shamed and outraged by his mother's hasty and incestuous marriage. He sobs audibly. When the "uncle-father" addresses him,

"But now, my cousin Hamlet, and my son,"

he answers aside, in bitter murmur,

"A little more than kin, and less than kind."

To his mother's vague generalization about the commonness of death, he answers with restrained respect,

"Ay, Madame, it is—common."

But when she urges a question of cold complaint, he vindicates the profound sincerity of his grief in that fine speech beginning—

"Seems, Madame! nay it is."

We pause upon this passage, for in the searching and thoughtful emphasis he gave to its delivery, Mr. Booth struck the key-note of Hamlet's character, the depth of which, action nor language, however eloquent or effective, could ever fully reveal. "He had that *within* which passeth show."

CHARLES KEAN (Hermann Vezin): His first entrance in Hamlet was marked with a firmness and determination in bearing and walk which would have suited a young warrior just entering the lists; and he stood in a bold upright attitude, his arms folded and his handsome eyes turned *up* (so long that the position must have been painful) in utter disregard of his mother's words,

"Do not, for ever, with thy veiled lids  
Seek for thy noble father in the dust."

The whole action was picturesque, spirited and graceful, but utterly unlike Hamlet.

EDWIN FORREST (Alger): Most players of Hamlet, in the scene where he first appears among the courtiers before the King and Queen, have taken a conspicuous position, drawing all eyes. Forrest, with a delicate perception that the deep melancholy and suspicion in which he was plunged would make him averse to ostentation, was seen in the rear, as if avoiding notice, and only came forward when the King called him by name, with the title of son. He then betrayed his prophetic mislike

of his uncle by the dark look and satirical inflection with which he said aside,

"A little more than kin, and less than kind."

His reply to the expostulation of his mother,

"Seems, Madame, etc.,"

was given with a sincerity, naturalness and beauty irresistible in effect. His grief and gloom appeared to embody themselves in a voice that wailed and quivered the weeping syllables like the tone of a bell swinging above a city smitten with the plague.

CHARLES FECHTER (Kate Field): He was gloomy enough, was Mr. Fechter's Hamlet, as he sat beside his mother,—starting when the King addressed him as "our son," yet gently exclaiming, while kissing the Queen's hand with courtly grace, and giving by an almost imperceptible accent a key to the estimate in which he held his uncle-father,

"I shall in all my best obey *you*, Madame."

Left to himself, he gazed fondly at his father's portrait, worn about his neck, and illustrated the beautiful apostrophe by reference to it.

WILSON BARRETT (*Dramatic Notes*): Hamlet enters in the court-scene closely followed by the King and Queen. At the first words of the King, he rises as though resentful at being spoken to, and his reply to his mother bears a tone of indignation. By his manner, Hamlet is convinced in his own mind of the King's guilt, and he regards his own mother with no filial devotion. Indeed, Mr. Barrett shows no tenderness for his mother or anyone else in the play.

"A little more than kin and less than kind."

The last word was pronounced with a short *i*, as in *tinder*, and the German word for child, meaning a little more than cousin, but less than child. The word so pronounced is still in use in several districts in England.

*Shakspeariana* : Back in the centre of the group, within the noble room whose wide, round arches are hung with motley colored arras, stands watching them a peculiarly graceful young man in black velvet doublet, a loosely-gathered, wide-neck white shirt and black silk hose. He makes the one patch of solemn suiting in the midst of the many glancing colors. His absolute isolation from the rest of the people about him, and his ready suspicion of them, is the note on which Mr. Wilson Barrett lays the accent here and elsewhere throughout the play. The quivering muscles of his lips and cheeks, the involuntary twitching of the brows, the often unveiled keenness of his glance, and the bitter-sweetness of his replies to his mother, "*Seems*, Madame! Nay, it *is*: *I know not seems*," and "I shall in all my best obey you, Madame" (this, however, being given without the special stress with Fechter laid upon the *you*)—all these points of his demeanor indicate a conception of Hamlet, earnest, refined, studied from what he would call, doubtless, a common-sense point of view, original and attractive.

(Wilson Barrett's conception of Hamlet making him only twenty, it followed that the King and Queen were proportionately younger, and they were made to assume a lighter and brighter manner than usual. They laughed, they toyed much with each other, their hands and arms were intertwined and interlocked, but the poor Ghost

was left at the same age. A handsome King and Queen was thought to be an innovation, but with Fechter, George Jordan and Mrs. Ellsworth were as handsome a pair as ever sat on a throne.)

EDWIN BOOTH (Lucia Gilbert Calhoun, 1865): Before the splendid King and Queen bent a slight, lithe figure, robed in black, which seemed to absorb gloomily into itself the brightness of the place and cast a shadow on it—so sad, so desolate, so intense, so stricken it stood. When the King came toward it, with open palm and loud

“And now, my cousin Hamlet and *my son*,”

it started slightly and moved away; the scornful

“A little more than kin and less than kind,”

falling in a half whisper from his lips. While the Queen addressed to Hamlet her querulous commonplaces about death, he seemed to shake off a little of his abstraction; listened as one who endured, and answered with enforced respectfulness of manner,

“Ay, Madame, it is—common.”

But there was the agony of a deep heart in the

“Seems, Madame, nay it is—I know not seems,”

and in the lines that follow. Then one understood what his love for his father had been, and what his grief was. He heard the coarse harangue of the King with a courtier's silence, only the spasmodic closing of the hands at the words,

“Our chiefest courtier, cousin and our *son*,”

revealing the inward passion.

HENRY IRVING (Lady Hardy): From the first moment he enters upon the stage, lounging with a sour, discontented air, in the rear of his mother's retinue, we feel that no heroic creature will stride to the front to compel our admiration and carry our sympathies by storm; it is a very human being, with faults and frailties like our own. He is a gentleman, courteous in manner, pungent in speech, but with a mind clouded and ill at ease. The question of Hamlet's sanity or insanity has always been a moot point, some maintaining the one view, some the other. Mr. Irving sails between the two and represents him as neither wholly mad nor wholly sane; we feel that over-study, aided by an over-sensitive organization, has given his brain a slight twist, and sent it a pin's point awry; the sudden death of his father, followed so speedily by the shameless marriage of his mother, gives it a shock and it trembles in the balance; next comes the supernatural visitation, the declaration of his father's murder which utterly disturbs his reason; he cannot accept and dare not reject the Ghost's revelation, and at last he resolves on the play as a touchstone to decide the fact.

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### HAMLET'S FIRST SOLILOQUY.

THE ELDER BOOTH (Gould): Hamlet is left alone, and instantly unburdens his heart in the soliloquy beginning,

"Oh, that this too, too solid flesh would melt."

Did Shakspeare intend the speech to be uttered aloud or only mused upon? The question becomes pertinent,





HENRY IRVING.



in view of Lamb's objection to the stage-representation of the play, where he speaks of Hamlet's "light and noise abhorring ruminations." We think the terse vigor of the language would find a tongue. It did find an eloquent tongue in Booth. The jostle of thoughts, the impatient leaps of emotion, all crowding for utterance, found meet expression in his rapid and changeful delivery.

"Frailty, thy *name* is woman,"

as if no other name were needed.

"Married with mine uncle [*pause*],  
My father's brother [*in low and slighting tones*];

then without a pause —

"But no more *like my father*  
Than I to Hercules."

WILSON BARRETT (*Dramatic Notes*): When Hamlet is left alone he delivers the speech,

"Oh, that this too, too solid flesh, etc.,"

with his gaze attracted in the direction whither the King and Queen had gone, by the sound of laughter at the words,

"That it should come to this."

Here he also produced the medallion of his beloved father which he fondly regards.

GARRICK (G. C. Lichtenberg, 1775, quoted in Furness's "Variorum Shakspeare"): In the soliloquy,

"O, that this too, too solid flesh would melt,"

tears completely overpowered Garrick. Of the words

"So excellent a King,"

the last is uttered inaudibly; it is caught only from the movement of the lips, which close upon the word firmly

and with a quiver, in order to suppress an expression of grief which might seem unmanly.

EDWIN BOOTH (Lucia Gilbert Calhoun, 1865): The soliloquy,

“O, that this too, too solid flesh would melt,”

was given as he moved from side to side of the stage, or half flung down upon his chair in an attitude of utter abandonment. But this soliloquy was most unequal. Sometimes it seemed the merest repetition of words to him. Sometimes it seemed to shake his being and sometimes the lines,

“O God, O God,  
How weary, stale, flat and unprofitable  
Seem to me all the uses of this world,”

moaned themselves forth in tones so bitter and so hopeless, that one looked to see him end the scene with his bare bodkin.

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#### ENTER HORATIO, BERNARDO AND MARCELLUS.

EDWIN BOOTH (Lucia Gilbert Calhoun, 1865): The instant change from the passionate desolation of grief to the exquisite courtesy of the host, when the three young men approached, with his tender welcome to Horatio was one of the finest of his transitions. Indeed, the whole expression of his love for that strong, faithful limited, unimaginary nature, was very truthful. He leaned on him to the last, and seemed to go out upon the dread unknown with firmer soul, because his friend's even and undaunted spirit lent him courage. The story

of the appearance of the Ghost he hears with feverish eagerness, but with extreme quiet.

JOHN KEMBLE (Boaden): Kemble's reading was,

"Sir, my good FRIEND! I'll change *that* name with you."

This in reply to Horatio's greeting,

"Your poor *servant* ever."

Dr. Johnson thought the emphasis should be

"Sir, my good FRIEND! I'll *change* that name with you."

Henderson evidently understood it to mean "Change the term servant to friend," for he said,

"I'll change *that* name with YOU."

After having recognized Horatio and Marcellus, Mr. Kemble turned toward Bernardo and offered the "Good even, sir," to him. This was thought a novelty.

FECHTER (Kate Field): His fondness for Horatio was strongly defined from the moment of meeting. There were three distinct shades of tone in "My good friend" (meaning Horatio); "I am very glad to see you" (meaning Marcellus), and "Good even, sir" (meaning Bernardo).

KEMBLE (Boaden): The insinuation of the King's intemperance was plainly marked in the words:

"We'll teach you to DRINK *deep*,—ere you depart."

He restored "dearest foe," and "beteeme" the winds of heaven. In pronouncing the panegyric, "He was a man," a flood of tenderness came over him, and it was with tears he uttered,

"I shall not look upon his like again."

Others have declaimed the passage with stoical firmness,

and made distinction between the term "king" and "man."

FECHTER (Kate Field): An expression of great and tender beauty passed over Fechter's face as with clasped hands, he murmured,

"My father,—methinks I see my father:"

while there was filial pride in his explanation, with hand upon Horatio's shoulder, "He was a *man*, etc."

WILSON BARRETT (*Dramatic Notes*): Hamlet is quite prepared for the supernatural visitation for which Horatio tells him that he has seen his father. Hamlet gives the "Saw! Who?" in a quick tone of interrogation as though he was not at all surprised at such an event.

KEMBLE (Boaden):

"Did *you* not speak to it?"

to Horatio, was said emphatically, and tenderly, as inferring from the peculiar intimacy between them, that he surely had ventured to inquire the cause of so awful a visitation. This rendering was criticised adversely by Steevens, and the point was submitted by Kemble to Dr. Johnson who said, "To be sure, sir,—*you* should be strongly marked. I told Garrick so, long since, but Davy never could see it."

FECHTER (Kate Field): When Horatio described his encounter with the Ghost, Fechter crossed his hands the moment his father was mentioned, as if praying for the unhappy spirit. The action was entirely natural to a Catholic. Appealingly sweet was his

"Did you not speak to it?"

addressed to Marcellus, to which his Horatio replied,

"My Lord, *I* did."

Doubting, not willing to believe without strong evidence, he gave the line,

"Then saw you not his face; "

as if it read, "Then you did *not* see his face," which seems reasonable from Horatio's answer :

"Oh yes, my Lord, he wore his beaver up."

HAMLET: I would *I* had been there.

HORATIO: It would have much amazed you.

HAMLET: Very like, very like.

These lines have always been given as a response to Horatio. Fechter, meditating on the startling intelligence that the apparition wore his beaver up, murmured "very like" as if the sentence read, "very like—my father." Tears filled his eyes as he asked,

"Stayed it long? "

MACREADY: Hackett criticised Macready's "Armed, say you," in that it confused the auditor's mind as to whether he referred to the Ghost or to those who were to hold the watch that night.

"His beard was grizzled? No? "

After "grizzled" he allowed the witness not a moment for reflection, but impatiently and rather comically stammered "N—n—no? "

GARRICK (Mr. Harris, manager of Covent Garden, quoted by Reynolds): The effect Garrick produced when he uttered the words,

"I'll watch to-night,"

was electric. I have heard many actors give these words

in a calm, considerate manner; but Garrick, buoyant with hope and paternal love, rushed exultingly forward and spoke the words with an ardor and animation that electrified the whole audience.

HENRY IRVING (Edward R. Russell, 1875): When Horatio tells him that he thinks he saw his father yesternight, Hamlet does not start. He has enough to think of, and cannot keep his mind on chit-chat, "Saw! Who?" he says almost casually, barely following the discourse. Then with a perfect and most artistic truth to nature, he hears the story of the apparition. He has not anticipated it, but the misgivings of his mind, and the intensity of his distress have prepared him for anything. He will watch to-night, not announcing his resolve in a thunderous voice with the practiced *aplomb* of a veteran tragedian, but in tones of full of rapt, nervous excitement.

ROSSI (William Winter): On hearing of the apparition Rossi's Hamlet was almost as much affected as on seeing it—missing, to be sure, the subtlety of "Saw! Who?" which is calm wonder, but making a theatrical effect.

THE ELDER BOOTH (Gould): Booth uttered the words,

"Foul deeds will rise,"

as with the voice of fate. Then came the mighty parenthesis,

"Though all the earth o'erwhelm them,"

which he gave with a sweeping gesture, as if taking the solid earth, and lifting it as a wave of the sea is lifted,



and letting it fall. He then raised a warning hand, with significant motion, before his face, and with changed voice, couching strength of emphasis on a lower range of tones, resumed the suspended meaning,

“To men’s eyes.”

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### THE SCENES WITH THE GHOST.

WILSON BARRETT gave the first line “Is it very cold?” His previous suspicions of his uncle’s crime had prepared him for the news he had received from Horatio and robbed the meeting with the Ghost of all awe and terror. Hamlet had expected to see the Ghost, and consequently he is not terrified at its presence.

FECHTER (Kate Field): When Hamlet, Horatio, and Marcellus appear in the fourth scene, Fechter caused Hamlet to come from an opposite direction. Why? Because he had previously said that he would visit them “upon the platform ’twixt eleven and twelve.” They meet for the first time, and the dialogue says as much.

BETTERTON (Colley Cibber): You have seen a Hamlet, perhaps, who, on the first appearance of his father’s spirit, has thrown himself into all the straining vociferation requisite to express rage and fury, and the house has thundered its applause, though the misguided actor was all the while, as Shakspeare terms it, “tearing a passion to rags.” I am the more bold to offer you this particular instance, because the late Mr. Addison,

while I sat by him, to see this scene acted, made the same observation, asking me with some surprise, if I thought Hamlet should be in so violent a passion with the Ghost, which, although it might have astonished, it had not provoked him? For you may observe that in this beautiful speech, the passion never rises beyond an almost breathless astonishment, or an impatience limited by filial reverence, to enquire into the suspected wrongs that may have raised him from his peaceful tomb, and a desire to know what a spirit, so seemingly distressed, might wish or enjoin a sorrowful son to execute toward his future quiet in the grave. This was the light into which Betterton threw this scene which he opened with a pause of mute amazement, then rising slowly to a solemn, trembling voice, he made the Ghost equally terrible to the spectator as to himself. In the descriptive part of the natural emotions which the ghastly vision gave, the boldness of his expostulation was still governed by decency, manly, but not braving; his voice never rising into that seeming outrage, or wild defiance of what he naturally revered.

(Betterton, in his address to the Ghost, is thought to have omitted all after the line "Angels and ministers of grace, etc.," to "What may this mean?" If this was so, it is difficult to see how he obtained so much praise for the passage.)

MACKLIN (Davies): After the short ejaculation of "Angels and ministers, etc.," he endeavored to conquer that fear and terror into which he was naturally thrown by his first sight of the vision, and uttered the remainder of the address calmly, but respectfully, and with a firm

voice, as from one who had subdued his timidity and apprehension.

BARTON BOOTH as the Ghost (Davies): His slow, solemn and undertone of voice, his noiseless tread, as if he had been composed of air, and his whole deportment inspired the audience with the feeling which is excited by awful astonishment. The impression of his appearance in this part was so powerful upon a constant frequenter of the theatres for nearly sixty years that he assured me when long after Booth's death he was present at the tragedy of Hamlet, as soon as the name of the Ghost was pronounced on the stage, he felt a kind of awe and terror, of which, said he, I was soon cured by his appearance.

GARRICK (G. C. Lichtenberg, 1775, quoted in Furness's "*Variorum Shakspeare*"): Hamlet appeared in black. Horatio and Marcellus are with him, in uniform; they are expecting the Ghost. Hamlet's arms are folded, and his hat overshadows his eyes; the theatre is darkened, and the whole audience of some thousands is as still and all faces are as immovable as if they were painted on the walls; one might hear a pin drop in the remotest part of the theatre. Suddenly, as Hamlet retires somewhat further from the front to the left, turning his back upon the audience, Horatio starts exclaiming, "Look! my Lord, it comes!" pointing to the right, where, without the spectators being aware of its coming, the Ghost is seen standing motionless. At these words Garrick turns suddenly about, at the same instant starting with trembling knees two or three steps backward; his hat

falls off; his arms, especially the left, are extended straight out, the left hand as high as his head, the right arm is more bent, and the hand lower, the fingers are spread apart, and the mouth open; thus he stands one foot far advanced before the other, in a graceful attitude, as if petrified, supported by his friends, who, from having seen the apparition before, are less unprepared for it, and who fear that he will fall to the ground; so expressive of horror is his mein that a shudder seized me again and again before he began to speak; the almost fearful stillness of the audience which preceded this scene, and made one feel that he was hardly sure of himself, contributed, I suppose, not a little to the effect. At last Hamlet exclaims, not at the beginning but at the end of an expiration, and with an agitated voice:

“Angels and ministers of grace, defend us!”

words which complete all this scene could want to render it one of the greatest and most terrible. His eyes are fixed upon the Ghost even while he speaks with his friends, from whom he struggles to free himself. But, at last, as they will not let him go, he turns his face toward them, tears himself violently away from them, and with a quickness that makes one shudder, draws his sword upon them:

“I’ll make a ghost of him that lets me!”

he exclaims. That is enough for them. He then extends his sword toward the Ghost:

“Go on; I’ll follow thee.”

The Ghost leads the way. Hamlet, with the sword still held before him, stands motionless in order to gain a wider interval. At last, when the Ghost is no longer

visible to the spectators, he begins slowly to follow it, pausing, and then advancing, with the sword still extended, his eyes fixed upon the Ghost, his hair all disordered, and still breathless, until he disappears behind the scenes.

KEMBLE (Boaden): Kemble said,

“And for my soul, what CAN it do to *that*?”

Garrick, here with great quickness said,

“What can it do to *THAT*?”

In Garrick's this was a truism asserted; in Kemble's, not merely asserted, but enjoyed.

(Having drawn his sword to menace the friends who prevented him from following the Ghost, every Hamlet before Kemble presented the point to the phantom, as he followed him to the removed ground. Kemble, having drawn it on his friends, retained it in his right hand, but turned his left toward the Spirit, and drooped the weapon after him, a change says Boaden, both tasteful and judicious. As a defense against such a being it was ridiculous to present the point. To retain it unconsciously showed how completely he was absorbed by the dreadful mystery he was exploring.)

EDMUND KEAN (Hazlitt): Kean's surprise when he first sees the Ghost, his eagerness and filial confidence in following it, the impressive pathos of his action and voice in addressing it,

“I'll call thee ‘Hamlet, father, Royal Dane,’

were admirable. Mr. Kean has introduced in this part a new reading, as it is called, which we think perfectly correct. In the scene where he breaks from his friends

to obey the command of his father, he keeps his sword pointed behind him, to prevent them from following him, instead of holding it before him to protect him from the Ghost.

ROSSI: After Hamlet's struggle with his friends and he had broken from them, he exclaims "Away," directing them to leave him, which they do, bowing low at the command of the Prince; then turning to the Ghost he says "Go on, I'll follow thee."

THE ELDER BOOTH (Gould): His adjuration of the Spirit reached a climax of feeling in the word "Father," into which he threw the agony of his grief, and the contending hope and fear born of his strange visitation. After a momentary pause, the figure remaining silent, Hamlet re-commences, and delivers without pause,

"Royal Dane, O answer me."

In all editions of the play, there is a colon after "Royal Dane:" Booth overruled this pause, with a more subtle perception of the meaning of the passage than has been shown by any commentator.

The first effect of the sudden apparition passes rapidly off, and Hamlet soon finds himself in strange and calm accord with the silent but beckoning visitor. To the dissuasion of his friends he says:—

"Why, what should be the fear?  
I do not set my life at a pin's fee;  
And, for my soul, what can it do to that,  
Being a thing immortal, — as itself?

Booth's manner here is hard to analyze. It may suffice to say, that both tone and action scaled the heights of spiritual thought. He seemed to have digested in his

soul the very bitterness of death, to have passed beyond, and to speak as one conscious of his immortality.

EDMUND KEAN (Joe Cowen, quoted by Molloy): When Kean came on I was astonished. I was prepared to see a small man; but diminished by the unusual distance and his black dress, and a mental comparison with Kemble's princely person, he appeared a perfect pigmy; his voice, unlike any I had ever heard before, perhaps from its very strangeness, was most objectionable, and I turned to Keeley and at once pronounced him a most decided humbug. I quietly gazed on through three tedious scenes till it came to the dialogue with the Ghost, and at the line

"I'll call thee Hamlet—father,"

I was converted. Father is not a pretty word to look at, but it is beautiful to hear when lisped by little children, or spoken by Edmund Kean in Hamlet.

FORREST (Alger): When Hamlet, with Horatio and Marcellus, came upon the platform at twelve to watch for the Ghost, and said,

"The air bites shrewdly; it is very cold,"

he finely indicated by his absent and preoccupied manner that he was not thinking about the cold, but was full of the solemn expectation of something else. He took a position nigh to the entrance of the Ghost, and continued his desultory talk about the custom of carousing in Denmark, till the spectral figure stalked in, almost touching him. Then Hamlet turned with a violent start of amazement and a short cry, and while the white face looked down into his own, uttered the most affect-

ing invocation ever spoken by man, in a subdued and beseeching tone that seemed freighted with the very soul of bewildered awe and piteous pleading. His voice was in a high key but husky, the vocality half dissolved in mysterious breath. His look was that of startled amazement touched with love and eagerness. The remorseful Macbeth confronted the ghost of Banquo with petrifying terror; the thunderstruck Richard saw the ghosts of his victims with wild horror, but Hamlet was innocent, his spirit was that of truth and filial piety, and when the marble tomb yawned forth its messenger from the invisible world to revisit the glimpses of the moon, although his fleshly nature might tremble at recognizing the manifest supernatural, his soul would indeed be wonder-thrilled but not unhinged, feeling itself as immortal as that on which he looked. His figure perfectly still, leaning forward with intent face, his whole soul concentrated in eye and ear, breathed mute supplication. The harrowing tale finished, the Ghost disappears, saying

“Adieu! Adieu! Hamlet, remember me.”

A withering spell seemed to have fallen on Hamlet and instantly aged him. He looked as pale and shriveled as the frozen moonlight, and the wintry landscape around him. He spoke the soliloquy that followed, with a feeble and slow laboriousness expressive of terrible pain and anxiety.

FECHTER (Kate Field): Enveloped in a gray, picturesque cloak and black velvet cowl, Fechter's Hamlet dropped the former, and, with hands on Horatio at sight of the Ghost, delivered the invocation with solemn,



tender earnestness, removing the cowl at the word "king," and throwing filial pathos into the word "father."

"Go on, I'll follow thee."

His exit was slow, but in no way unnaturally measured, with sword unsheathed and held in the left hand as if it were a cross.

"Alas, poor Ghost,"

was given with pitying sweetness of tone. Kneeling at the words "I am thy father's Spirit," Fechter did not rise until the adjuration, "Haste me to know, etc.," and though his back was turned to the audience during the Ghost's confession, there was much expression in his pantomime. Nevertheless, but for the exceedingly clever management of the Ghost's instantaneous disappearance—the invention being Fechter's—it was a pity to lose the play of feature which Fechter would have thrown into his eager listening silence.

EDWIN BOOTH (Winter): Many years ago an accidental impulse led Booth to hold out his sword, hilt foremost, toward the receding spectre, as a protective cross, the symbol of that religion to which Hamlet so frequently recurs. The expedient was found to justify itself, and he made it a custom.

HENRY IRVING (London *Theatre*): The old stage direction that the Ghost should make his revelation "on another part of the platform" is probably due to the absence of scenery in Shakspeare's time, and the revelation at the Lyceum (1878-9) was made in a lonely spot some way distant from the castle. This change is in strict accordance with the text; Hamlet follows the

Ghost from midnight till the approach of dawn, and his words "I'll go no further," joined to the difficulty Horatio and Marcellus evidently have in finding him, denote that a considerable distance must have been traveled. The quaint apostrophe to the Ghost, "Art thou there, old true penny?" and "Well said, old mole," are restored. The scene as painted at the Lyceum was striking. The Ghost had taken Hamlet to

"The dreadful summit of the cliff  
That beetles o'er his base into the sea."

and standing among a number of massive rocks, proceeds to speak. The soft light of the moon falls upon the spectral figure; not a sound from below can be heard, and the first faint glimpses of the dawn are stealing over the immense expanse of water before us.

EDWIN BOOTH (Lucie Gilbert Calhoun, 1865): Hamlet is turned away, when Horatio suddenly exclaims, "Look, my Lord, it comes!" He catches sight of the vision, staggers toward Horatio, falls against him, gasping,

"Angels and ministers of grace, defend us!"

It is not terror of the supernatural alone. It is the appalling confirmation of his fears. It is the presence of his father hovering in some awful borderland, which is not life nor death, but wherein is seen the horrible image of both. His voice is husky and far away. He shivers as if the cold of the grave were upon him. Then reverence for the majestic presence banishes fear. His voice gathers power and sweetness, as the words struggle forth. When he utters the one word "father," his love seems to overflow it, and expand it into volumes of

tenderest speech as he falls on his knees, and stretches out eager hands to the solemn Shade. The "O, answer me," was incredibly imploring and persuasive. The terrible silence seems again to appall him, and the

"Say, why is this? Wherefore? What should we do?"

was breathed out as if a man of stone had spoken. When his friends urge him not to follow the Ghost, he answers as knowing that they have spoken but unconscious of their presence, like one in a dream; so possessed is he by the command of the King. He is deaf to Horatio's remonstrance. The change to the passionate outcry against their hindrance of him; the supple strength with which he eludes their hold; the instant return to childish submission and obedience to the Ghost; the slow creeping away into the night; the half doubt and shuddering dread that overtake him; the re-resolve that come what may, he will pluck out the heart of this mystery; his quicker steps as he is lost in the shadows, are finely dramatic.

When the scene opens, the whole stage is disclosed. In the distance glows the grim castle, noisy with the orgies of the drunken King. The Ghost stalks into the moonlight. Down the massive steps leading to the platform stumbles Hamlet, crying out hoarsely in the darkness,

"Whither wilt thou lead me? Speak, I'll go no further;"

and staggering forward, the moonlight falls on his ashen face, on his wild eyes, on his disheveled hair.

"I am thy father's spirit,"

groans the Ghost, in voice that seems to come from the lowest fires, wherein he is compelled to fast. Slowly,

Hamlet sinks on his knees. There is no longer terror in his countenance. Infinite yearning, infinite compassion, infinite tenderness, agonized longing to know the truth, look from his face.

HENRY IRVING (Edward R. Russell): The extreme and plaintive beseechingness of Irving's address to the Ghost is the distinct novelty of his reading. It has been complained that he does not look so frightened as a man would who saw a ghost, but to Hamlet this is not *a* ghost but *the* Ghost.

FECHTER (George B. Woods): We have learned to see the melancholy Prince, after the first moment of natural terror, subdued to a breathless awe of the spirit of his father, so possessed by a yearning, pitying affection for "the dear murdered," as to be almost unconscious of all other things; but this Hamlet showed about the same quality of terror with his plebeian companions, and then forgets the restraining presence of a supernatural visitant, to squabble with and put down his friends by an exhibition of superior physical strength, and to loftily defy them after he had shaken them off.

WILSON BARRETT (*Shakspeariana*): Mr. Barrett did not scare us by his own horror as Fielding says Garrick scared Partridge. Partridge (in "Tom Jones") could see nothing appalling in the Ghost itself, but he "gave that credit to Garrick," he had denied other assurance that this apparition was a real ghost, and "fell into such a violent fit of trembling that his knees knocked against each other," declaring, "Nay, you may call me coward if you will, but if that little man there on the stage is

not frightened, then I never saw a man frightened in my life."

Now, there may not be many Partridges in a modern audience. It was evident, however, that Mr. Barrett meant to seem to be frightened himself, and though his fright was not powerful "so horridly to shake our dispositions," it did not fail to be impressive. It was a difficult task. To be explosive and yet fail to stun, to utter the great oh's! that Mr. Barrett uttered at the first appearance of the Ghost (and afterward on the ramparts at the words, "Mark me"), to kneel and cower, with outstretched, trembling fingers, and yet to question horror-stricken, to start, and stop, gasping, and yet to resolve, fearfully, against the restraint of Horatio and Marcellus,—though he drew no sword against them, as the usual stage-custom is, an act of violence which might serve to nerve the hard resolve—to break away and follow, to lift his cloak and veil his eyes as though the hideous sight were more than could be borne, and yet to follow the dread wafture of the Ghost to "more removed ground," to falter and follow slowly, yet steadily; to aim thus at the difficult effect of inducing abject terror by sympathy, and yet, though not reaching this, still not to belittle the part, which must be reverential,—to do this, Mr. Barrett must have almost reached his object.

GARRICK (Cole): Dr. Johnson, who never lost an opportunity of finding fault with Garrick, thought his terror in the ghost-scene exaggerated and unnatural. "Do you think, Sir, if you saw a ghost," said Boswell, "you would start as Garrick does in Hamlet?" "No,

Sir," replied the great philosopher, "If I did, I should frighten the Ghost."

HENRY IRVING (Edward R. Russell): Does Irving discard the tablets? By no means. But he makes the use of them life-like and probable. His snatching them from his pocket, and writing on them, is the climax of an outburst hardly distinguishable from hysteria.

KEMBLE AND HENDERSON (Boaden): The kneeling at the descent of the Ghost was censured as a trick, but it marked the filial reverence of Hamlet, and the solemnity of the engagement he had contracted. Henderson saw it, and adopted it immediately, and was applauded for doing so. Henderson and Kemble agreed in the seeming intention of particular disclosure to Horatio:

"Yes, but there *is*, Horatio, and much offense too,"

turned off upon the pressing forward of Marcellus to partake the communication. Kemble only, however, prepared the way for this by the marked address to Horatio,

"Did *you* not speak to it?"

THE ELDER BOOTH (Gould): In the scene following the terrible revelation of the Spirit, when his friends find him and he swears them to secrecy, Hamlet holds up the hilt of his sword, the cross and not the blade for the imposition of their hands. We have seen, both in picture and on the stage, the hands of Horatio and Marcellus laid along the blade.

Ghost (*beneath*). Swear.

Hamlet. There are more things in heaven

and *earth*, Horatio,

Than are dreamt of in your *philosophy*.

A light scorn in the last word; and his hand passed his forehead, with a gesture equally light and evanescent.

FECHTER (Kate Field): He bowed profoundly at the Ghost's "Fare thee well at once," and when Horatio called without, "Heaven secure him," meaning Hamlet, Fechter, intent upon the Ghost, prayerfully added, "So be it," turning the words to a deeper significance than they had ever possessed. Hamlet alone was his valued friend. Horatio alone had so far sworn not to reveal the news, and Hamlet hurriedly began to tell his story,

"There's ne'er a villain dwelling in all Denmark —"

when, suddenly remembering and doubting Marcellus, he turned from his purpose and added,

"But he's an arrant knave."

At which platitude Horatio has reason to criticise his friend. The line,

"You, as your business and desire shall point you,"

was addressed to Marcellus. Hamlet's wild and whirling words were because of his presence. He was talking to conceal thought. Taking Horatio's hand (according to stage-direction) he remarked to him,

"Touching this vision here,  
It is an honest Ghost, that let me tell you."

Then looking at Marcellus he continued,

"For *your* desire to know what is between us,  
O'ermaster it as you may."

Fechter's Hamlet did not insult Horatio by assuming superior wisdom and exclaiming, "There are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio, than are dreamt of in *your* philosophy," but accented "*philosophy*," by which

the pronoun possessed the same significance as when Edmund Kean substituted "our" for "your."

With arm linked in Horatio's, Hamlet said,

"Let us go in together,"

and leaving Marcellus down the stage addressed to him the parting injunction,

"And still your fingers on your lips, I pray."

ROSSI (William Winter): On seeing the Ghost he fell backward with a wild cry, like that of the startled sea-bird; and although the only subsequent remark made by the lime-lighted spectre that seemed to affect him was the command not to assail his mother, his demeanor toward that visitant was steadily replete with a fearful reverence; and the act abruptly and improperly closed with the oath business—so as to make a picture.

HENRY IRVING (Edward R. Russell): At the words "with arms encumbered thus," it is usual for Hamlets to fold their arms and look mysterious. Irving takes the arm of one of his companions, as he supposes they may take each other's hereafter, and assumes a confidential air, as if the two were comparing their past recollections.

SALVINI as the Ghost (William Winter): It pleases Salvini sometimes to use his great talent for pantomime in the wrong place—as, for example, when uttering Othello's farewell, a speech which is never so fine and touching as when it is spoken with no gesticulation or embellishment whatever. But he is supreme and superb in the employment of this expedient at moments when it is essential. As the Ghost, in Hamlet, he could not



and did not use it, but relied exclusively on a sombre, unearthly aspect and the scope and depth and variety of his phenomenal voice. The impersonation was pervaded with a noble dignity and grand solemnity. It is not too much to say that in this performance of the Ghost Signor Salvini gave a deeper and clearer impression of his intellectual grasp of this subject of Hamlet than he has before given by his performance of Hamlet himself. His elocution in the Ghost's narrative was beautifully shaded, and his introduction of the tender impulse of human feeling when speaking the adieu to Hamlet had a most touching effect.

(E. A. Dithmar, *New York Times*): The Ghost of Signor Salvini, except that that actor used his own language, was just as impressive as the Ghost of the late D. W. Waller, long associated with Mr. Booth's Hamlet, or the performance of Mr. Mead in Mr. Irving's production of the tragedy, and no more impressive than these. An actor of Salvini's wonderful power is out of place in such a part. If he had attempted to give the part more prominence than belongs to it he would have committed an artistic blunder which, of course, Salvini would not be guilty of. As he did no more than wear a picturesque costume of dull hues and speak the words of Shakspeare, translated into Italian, in a monotone, he naturally kept the place in the work the dramatist gave to him. Salvini's strength lies in the simulation of violent passions. The force of the passions of love and hatred have been shown on the stage by him in a manner no other living player can equal. But the shade of Hamlet's father is as passionless as an icicle; some

learned critics have contended that the spectre is merely the result of a reflex action of the Prince's bewildered brain, and that theory is not a whit more puerile than others, gravely expounded, concerning the same play. Salvini's Ghost, then, was not remarkable in any way except that he spoke in Italian poetry which it is not possible to render in that tongue with any approach to its grandeur and dignity in the original. And yet many hundreds of persons paid four dollars to see Booth's Hamlet, with Salvini as the Ghost, when they had often before seen the American actor in the same play supported by a phantom quite as useful.

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## ACT II.—POLONIUS.

(Davies): The constant practice of the stage from the revival of Hamlet soon after the Restoration to this day (1784), may, perhaps, contribute to justify my opinion of this character. Polonius was always acted by what is termed the low comedian, by Lovell, Nokes, and Cross in former times, who were succeeded by Griffin, Hippisley, Taswell and Shuter; and these again by Wilson, Baddeley and Edwin in the present time. About five and twenty years since, Mr. Garrick had formed a notion that the character of Polonius had been mistaken and misrepresented by the players, and that he was not designed by the author to excite laughter and be an object of ridicule. He imagined, I suppose, with his friend, Dr. Johnson, that his false reasoning and false wit were mere accidents in character, and that his leading feature was dotage encroaching upon wisdom. Full

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of this opinion, Mr. Garrick persuaded Woodward on his benefit-night to put himself in the part of Polonius; and what was the consequence? The character, divested of its ridiculous vanity, appeared to the audience flat and insipid. His dress was very different from what the part generally wore; the habit was grave and rich, cloth of scarlet and gold. So little was the audience pleased with Woodward or Woodward with himself that he never after attempted Polonius.

(There is something incongruous, however, in the age of Polonius as he is generally represented, and that of his daughter Ophelia; and the thoughtful spectator is constantly asking himself how it is that so old a man can have so young a daughter.)

FECHTER (F. J. Walton): Polonius asks:

“What do you read, my Lord?”

Here Fechter, looking up quickly, replied in a listless, indifferent tone, “words,”—then, after a deliberate pause, he advanced toward Polonius quickly and, striking the book excitedly with his forefinger, impatiently finishes—“words, words!” spoken as quickly as tongue could do.

KEMBLE (Boaden): Where Hamlet is asked what is the matter which he reads, and he answers: “Slanders,” Mr. Kemble, to give the stronger impression of his wildness, tore the leaf out of the book.

FECHTER (Kate Field):

“Conception is a blessing; but not as your daughter may conceive, friend, look to ‘t.”

It was a mad laugh that followed “friend.” Hamlet pointed to his open book as he muttered “look to ‘t,”

and Polonius, literal in all things, ran his eye over the page to learn the "cause of this defect." Hamlet watched him narrowly as if to see how the simulated madness took effect, when the old man delivered his side-speech, beginning:

"How pregnant sometimes his replies are."

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### OPHELIA.

(Davies): Till the sweet character of Ophelia was personated by Mrs. Cibber, it was not well understood, at least, for these last sixty years. Mrs. Betterton, says Colley Cibber, was much celebrated for action in Shakspeare's plays, and Sir William Davenant gave her such an idea of it as he could catch from the boy-Ophelias he had seen before the civil wars. Mrs. Booth's figure, voice and deportment in this part, raised in the minds of the spectators an amiable picture of an innocent, unhappy maid, but she went no further. Of Mrs. Clive's Ophelia I shall only say that I regret that the first comic actress in the world should so far mistake her talents as to undertake it. No eloquence can paint the distressed and distracted look of Mrs. Cibber while she uttered the sentence: "Lord, we know what we are." No actress has hitherto revived the idea of Mrs. Cibber's Ophelia except Mrs. Baddeley, whose pleasing sensibility, melodious voice and correspondent action made us less regret the great actress in this part.

MODJESKA (Elwyn H. Barron, in Chicago *Inter-Océan*, 1889): "The Ophelia of Mme. Modjeska was a most gratifying surprise. Her success in the realization

of this sweetly chaste, and lovable, tender character was so much beyond reasonable expectation that it amounted to a triumph. \* The most skeptical was prepared to witness a well-considered, intelligent, artistic representation of the character, but the most enthusiastic admirer of this actress hardly looked for a new and exquisite creation that should dim memory of more youthful Ophelias. But Mme. Modjeska gave to the character not merely an artistic embellishment that was interesting, but also she infused it with a sentimental quality that awakened a sympathy deep, vital, loving, and instantly demonstrated what value even to such characters is the intelligence of the experienced actress and the accomplished artiste. She made real the high-minded attributes of the virtuous Ophelia, and defined the depth of heart-sorrow and grieving that the conduct of Hamlet put upon her. We do not remember ever before to have seen the womanhood of Ophelia so beautifully revealed. Mme. Modjeska's interpretation differed from others as much as her costuming of the part is different from the conventional dress. Instead of white robes in the mad-scene she appropriately wore a colored silk gown, and in escaping this traditional restriction she freed herself from all others that interfered with a womanly, thoughtful, sorrow-acquainted treatment of the character. Mme. Modjeska has done nothing worthier of praise, and in giving us a new Ophelia has not marred the ideal.

## ENTER ROSENCRANTZ AND GUILDENSTERN.

EDMUND KEAN (Hazlitt): The manner of Kean's taking Guildenstern and Rosencrantz under each arm, under the pretense of communicating his secret to them, when he only means to trifle with them, had the finest effect and was, we conceive, exactly in the spirit of the character. So was the suppressed tone of irony in which he ridicules those who gave ducats for his uncle's picture, though they would make mouths at him, while his father lived.

FECHTER (Kate Field): Hamlet's reception to Rosencrantz and Guildenstern was most cordial until he saw his uncle's portrait around the neck of Guildenstern; then expression and manner changed, and the question, "Were you not sent for?" was put eagerly, with suspicion of foul play which waxed stronger as he bade them speak "to the purpose." Hamlet's rejoinder in regard to his uncle's "picture in little," was illustrated by taking up the picture pendent from Guildenstern's neck. Then dropping it, he crossed to the right, and made an aside, "There is something in this more than natural, if philosophy could find it out."

THE ELDER BOOTH (Gould): At the words, "This most excellent canopy, the air, look you—this brave o'er-hanging" (he omitted the word firmament, as in the folio), his voice, sombre and husky in the preceding lines, suddenly darted upward like light, seemed to penetrate the sky, to run all over the firmament, to search out and give back the remotest echoes of heaven.

FORREST (Alger) : Of all who have acted the part no one, perhaps, has ever done such complete justice to the genius of Hamlet as Forrest did in his noble delivery of the great speeches and soliloquies, with full observance of every requirement of measure, accent, inflection, and relative importance of thought. In the famous description by Hamlet of the disenchanting effect of his heavy-heartedness, the voice of Forrest brought the very objects spoken of before the hearer,—the goodly frame, the earth; the most excellent canopy, the air; the brave overhanging firmament, the majestical roof fretted with golden fire. And when, turning from the beauty of the material universe, to the greater glory and mystery of the divine foster-child and sovereign of the earth—Man, he altered the tone of admiration to a tone of awe, his speech stirred the soul like the grandest chords in the Requiem of Mozart, thrilling it with sublime premonitions of its own infinity.

MACREADY (Hackett) : He wanted the philosophic sententiousness requisite for an harmonious delivery of the analysis of Man; besides which he adopted the late John Kemble's omission of the indefinite article *a* before man.

(Mr. Hackett held that "when the wind is southerly I know a hawk from a handsaw," should be rendered so as to express the idea that even then when his intellectual atmosphere was most befogged and impenetrable, he knew enough to distinguish such dissimilar things.)

BARRY SULLIVAN (*Saturday Review*, April 6, 1861) : When Mr. Barry Sullivan came out as Hamlet, a few years ago, many persons attended the Haymarket for

the mere purpose of hearing him say, "I know a hawk from a heron—pshaw!" instead of the ordinary reading.

ROSSI (William Winter): In act second it was quite impossible to tell whether the actor's intention was to depict the madness as real or assumed; but, either way, it was depicted with fidelity to truth, and with much beauty of detail, throughout the colloquies with the two courtiers and Polonius. Signor Rossi's management of his eyes is here notably fine, and the misery underlying an air of grotesque mystery and sardonic humor, had an effect of rare pathos.

KEMBLE (Hackett): Kemble used to instruct Guildenstern to attempt to go off before him in one of the scenes — he checked the courtier by a severe look and then walked off with much dignity; this would have been good acting if there had been one syllable in the text to warrant it.

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### THE SCENE WITH THE PLAYERS.

THE ELDER BOOTH (Gould): "He that plays the King shall be welcome," was uttered with eager emphasis, a momentary betrayal by Hamlet of his inner thought; which, however, he masks immediately by a running and cheery commentary on the other players.

ROBERT B. MANTELL:

"Then came each actor on his *ass*."

Hamlet says this, pointing to Polonius, to indicate the meaning of a derisive word.



EDMUND KEAN (Hazlitt): Whether the way in which Mr. Kean hesitates in repeating the first line of the speech in the interview with the players, and then, after several ineffectual attempts to recollect it, suddenly hurries on with it, "The rugged Pyrrhus," etc., is in perfect keeping, we have some doubt; but there was great ingenuity in the thought; and the spirit and life were beyond everything.

GARRICK AND KEMBLE (Boaden): Garrick repeated "The *mobled* queen," after the player as in doubt; Kemble, as in sympathy.

LOUIS JAMES (E. A. Dithmar): James rejects both the "innobled" and the "unnobled" queen of fussy commentators, and goes back, with Irving, to "mobled queen;" but he does not repeat the phrase to himself as if it called up a melancholy thought; instead he speaks it lightly, glancing with a passing expression of surprise at Guildenstern. This is the most noteworthy new "point" he makes. The idea suggests an eminently practical mind.

FECHTER (Kate Field): One knew by the tender music of Hamlet's voice in exclaiming,

"O, Jephthah, judge of Israel — what a treasure had'st thou!"

that his thoughts were with the fair Ophelia, and it was this memory that rendered him so gentle in checking Polonius for interrupting the player, hushing him, commanding him by putting finger on lips with as much kindness as if the old courtier was indeed a big baby; Hamlet took up the text, "So: proceed you," and for

the first time the little word "so" was set in its proper action.

Hamlet listened with such interest to the actor's speech as to accompany it with unconscious pantomime, and silent repetition of the words; but Garrick did the same.

"The mobled queen!" repeated Fechter's Hamlet, thinking of his mother; and, struck by the coincidence, became so absorbed as to leave Polonius unchecked when he again interrupted the actor.

(Fechter told Wilkie Collins that to speak with ease and propriety, the one line: "What's Hecuba to him or he to Hecuba," was a labor of weeks.)

FORREST (Alger): Among the many delicate shadings of character exemplified in the impersonation, one of the quietest and best was the contrast of his sharp, lawyer-like manner of cross-questioning Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, and detecting that in the guise of friends they were really spies, with the thoughtful and gracious kindness of his dealing with the players. Seated part of the time, he spoke to the poor actor like an old friend, and called him back, when he was retiring, to add another thought, and finally dismissed him, with a sympathetic touch on the shoulder and a smile.

(Quoted by Furness): The instructions to the players were subdued and wholly unconventional. After speaking a few sentences, he turned his back to the player and walked toward a chair. He then passed him and again approached, again retired, and, seating himself, delivered the greater part of the speech in that attitude.

ROSSI: What was to us a new reading, and one that seems hardly authorized by what follows, was applying the remark of Polonius at the end of the player's Hecuba-speech to Hamlet, who instead of the player is affected to tears, and it is of Hamlet Polonius is made to say:

"Look, whether he has not turned his color and has tears in his eyes.  
—Pray you no more."

(William Winter): The application of "Look, whether he has not changed color," to Hamlet, instead of to the player, in this scene, though entirely unjustifiable and wrong, aided in making up still another stage-point for the Prince—in one of those quick transitions which foreign actors practice, and which surprise often mistakes for genius.

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### SOLILOQUY CLOSING THE SECOND ACT.

WILKS AND GARRICK (Davies): In the speaking of this impassioned soliloquy Wilks had an ample field to display the warmth of his disposition. The actor's genuine temper sometimes combines itself so strongly with the feelings appropriate to the character, that the scene receives additional advantage from it. The various passages of the speech he felt with energy and expressed with vehemence; to give force to sentiment, this player would sometimes strike the syllables with too much ardor, and in the judicious ear create something like dissonance rather than harmony; but this was not frequent with him.

In this situation of Hamlet, Barry was pleasingly animated; but here it must be owned, that Garrick rose

superior to all competition; his self-expostulations, and upbraidings of cowardice and pusillanimity, were strongly pointed, and blended with marks of contemptuous indignation, the description of his uncle held up, at once, a portrait of horror and derision. When he closed his strong paintings with the epithet "*kindless* villain," a tear of anguish gave a most pathetic softness to the whole passionate ebullition. One strong feature of Hamlet's character is filial piety; this Garrick preserved through the part. By restoring a few lines, which preceding Hamlets had omitted, he gave a vigor as well as connection, to the various members of the soliloquy. It is impossible to forget the more than common attention of the audience, which his action and change of voice commanded, when he pronounced:

"—— I have heard  
That guilty creatures sitting at a play——"

and the following lines to the end of the act.

THE ELDER BOOTH (Gould):

"The play's the thing  
Wherein I'll *catch* the conscience of the King."

Booth emphasized "catch;" it was objected that he should have emphasized "conscience," but he really emphasized both words, and all in due relation.

FECHTER (Kate Field): The tremendous soliloquy closing this act was marvelous in variety. Its gradual crescendo and diminuendo was most artistic, while the climax:

"The play's the thing,  
Wherein I'll catch the conscience of the King,"

came like a sudden revelation to a tortured brain and

was clutched at with all the energy with which nature seizes upon forlorn hopes.

(George B. Woods): In grandeur and magnetism of gesture only Ristori, of all the artists who have trod our stage within the last decade can be compared to him. It is a sign of the genius of the man that the audience never detects any incongruity, but watches every instant of his presence on the stage with intense eagerness, and recognizes with equal appreciation the magnificent clutch with which he says: "I'll *catch* the conscience of the King," and the graphic grace with which he indicates for Polonius the outlines of the whale in the sky.

WILSON BARRETT: The word "kindless" villain was pronounced short as in the first line Hamlet speaks—meaning "childless villain." [The King had been but recently married.] Instead of ending the second act with this soliloquy, Mr. Barrett continues the act till after the scene with Ophelia, the act ending with the King's

"Madness in great ones."

This brings the "rogue and peasant" speech and the "To be" soliloquy very near together, and the change from passion to philosophy is one difficult to make, but the division, in itself, is natural.

(In the 1623 folio there is no division of the play into either acts or scenes after the second scene of the second act.)

ROSSI (William Winter): "The play's the thing," being wrongly but powerfully spoken with the violence of an Italian bravo, gave still another electric shock.

HENRY IRVING (Edward R. Russell): A silly practice has prevailed among Hamlets of uttering "The play's the thing," as if the idea had just struck them. Irving makes them partly the culmination of a line of thought, and partly the natural accompaniment of a most striking action. With an exuberance exactly corresponding in another groove of feeling with the quasi-hysterical use of the tablets in the first act, he rushes to a pillar and placing his note-book against it, begins, as the act-drop descends, to scribble hints for the speech he means to write.

LOUIS JAMES (E. A. Dithmar): All the first part of the soliloquy beginning, "Oh what a rogue," James omits; after the players' exit he begins abruptly and fiercely with:

"I have heard  
That guilty creatures sitting at a play,"

and brings down the act-drop amid clamorous applause.

LUDWIG BARNAY (E. A. Dithmar): In his reading of the first soliloquy, "O, what a rogue," the actor is beyond criticism. The music of his voice has an irresistible effect. The passion of the scene is communicated to the audience, and the climax is of splendid force.

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### ACT III.—"TO BE, OR NOT TO BE?"

WILKS, BARRY AND GARRICK (Davies): Wilks spoke this soliloquy with a pleasing melancholy of countenance and grave despondency of action. He was less skilful in the utterance of sentiment than pas-

sion. His greatest fault in deportment proceeded from his aptness to move or shift his ground. It was said of him by a sour critic that he could never stand still.

Barry, not having middle tones in his voice, could not give the requisite grave energy to sentiment; he was, therefore, obliged in some situations of character, to raise his powers of speech above their ordinary tone. Garrick, by an expressive countenance and flexible voice, gave full force to the profound reflections of this meditation on futurity, which he pursued through all their progress, with exquisite judgment and address.

GARRICK (Murdoch): Garrick's reading of Hamlet's soliloquy on death appears (from Sir Joshua Steele's Speech Notation) to have been an impressive and tranquil utterance of reflective thought, without impassioned or demonstrative emphasis or significant accentual stress; with little or no distinction of loud or soft, but nearly uniform, something below ordinary force or, as Steele said, "*sotto voce* or *poco piano*."

KEMBLE (Boaden): "Perchance to dream." Kemble prolonged the word dream meditatively.

EDMUND KEAN (Hazlitt): Kean's speech in describing his own melancholy, his instructions to the players, and the soliloquy on death, were all delivered in a tone of fine, clear and natural recitation. His pronunciation of the word "contumely" in the last of these is, we apprehend, not authorized by custom, or by the metre.

THE ELDER BOOTH (Gould): The beginning of the meditation, "To be, or not to be," was uttered in a voice

like the mystic murmur of a river running underground, and required an attentive ear. "That undiscovered country" (in a manner unimaginably remote) "from whose bourne no traveler *returns*"—given with accelerated and vibrating intensity, the stroke of emphasis coming surprisingly on the last word. It shocked the elocutionist, but delighted the Shakspearian scholar. The soliloquy was marked by a curious reading—thus:

"For who would bear the whips and scorns of time,  
When he himself might his quietus make?"

Here he made a full stop. Then, as if beginning a new sentence, and without pause in the delivery of it, he went on:

"With a bare bodkin who would fardels bear, etc."

He affirmed that bodkin was a local term in some parts of England for a padded yoke worn over the shoulders for the burden on either side; and that a *bare* bodkin was a yoke without the pad, and therefore galling.

MACREADY (Hackett): He lacked the semblance of profound abstraction and of deep meditateness—that absence of action and motion—I may say that almost statue-like station which is natural to a mind absorbed in philosophical and metaphysical self-debate, whilst the general physique of the man seemed in a state of complete repose. It was very inferior to the manner of Edmund Kean or of Charles Young. In the sentence:

"To die? to sleep. No more!"

the last two words were an interrogatory and as though they involved the continuity of a question instead of denoting an emphatic and responsive exclamation of a



conclusive reflection upon his own preceding answer to his self-inquiry.

MACREADY AND CHARLES KEAN (*Sheffield Telegraph*): Macready, though always impressive and grand, may be credited with a large share of the responsibility for the existence of that numerous school of heavy tragedians who emphasize their r's to treble power, and make their final syllables ring and re-echo into ridiculous results. "To-er be-er, or-re nott-er be," was the kind of declamation to which the great artist's auditors were often treated. Charles Kean, in addition to the misfortune of having a great father, which led him to say that his eminent parent was the greatest enemy of his life, labored under the peculiar disadvantage of a kind of continuous catarrh, which gave rise to a soliloquy of this complexion: "To be, or dot to be; ch'dat is the queschedion."

EDWIN BOOTH (Mrs. Clarke): In a discussion with Henry Tuckerman of New York, that gentleman who had witnessed many of the old actors, observed to Booth that they all stood during the soliloquies, and inquired if it were not possible to alter this. On the next representation, Booth seated, began the soliloquy: "To be, or not to be," Mr. Tuckerman watching the play could not conceive how Hamlet could rise from that chair with propriety and grace. When at the words, "to sleep, perchance to dream," after an instant of reflection, during which the mind of Hamlet had penetrated the eternal darkness vivid with dreams, he rose with the terror of that terrible "perchance" stamped upon his features,

continuing: "Ay, there's the rub." His friend was satisfied that the actor had caught the inspiration of the lines in that reflective pause.

FECHTER (Kate Field): Fechter pointed the moral of the soliloquy by bringing on an unsheathed sword as if he had again been contemplating the suicide that would free him from his oath.

(J. H. Fitzpatrick): In his rendering of the soliloquy on death, he rushed upon the stage with frantic impatience with drawn sword, and delivered the first line: "To be, or not to be," with spasmodic earnestness as if the question must be instantly decided, a treatment wholly unlike the measured, systematic precision with which the lines have always been given. It was the continuation rather than the beginning of a process, nor did he once fall into the preoccupied, apathetic style so prevalent.

ROSSI (William Winter): The suicide-speech was said with perfect elocution, and Signor Rossi was more like Hamlet in the saying of it than at any other moment in the entire performance.

E. L. DAVENPORT (New York *Times*): The soliloquy "To be, or not to be," was spoken with rare discretion. The reading was in no sense declamatory or objective, but on the contrary, it fulfilled the idea of introspection which the text implies. It was clearly a self-communion concerning the solemn issues of existence or non-existence, and not an out-spoken utterance enforcing a theory or balancing a doubt.



E. L. DAVENPORT.



ROBERT B. MANTELL: The soliloquy was recited for the most part, as he sat in a lounging attitude on the footstool of the throne.

GARRICK (G. C. Lichtenberg, 1775, quoted in Furness's "*Variorum Shakspeare*") : In the celebrated soliloquy "To be, or not to be," Hamlet having already begun to assume the madman, appears with hair all in disorder, locks of it hanging down over one shoulder, one of his black stockings has fallen down, allowing the white under-stocking to be visible, and a loop of his red garter hangs down midway of the calf of his leg. Then he slowly comes to the front, wrapt in thought, his chin resting on his right hand, and the elbow of his right arm in his left hand ; his looks are bent with great dignity, sidewise to the ground. Taking his right hand from his chin, but holding the arm still supported by his left hand, he utters the words "To be, or not to be," softly, but, on account of the profound stillness, audible all over the house.

LUDWIG BARNAY (E. A. Dithmar) : We do not like his use of the dagger in the soliloquy on immortality. Hamlet has not got so close to the idea of self-slaughter as that device implies. Barnay's treatment of this soliloquy, indeed, seems fussy and undignified. His rich voice produces strangely harsh and unpleasant tones in delivering the beautiful words, and his bearing and gesticulation suggest a mood of nervous irritability rather than one of profound sorrow and deep contemplation. There is nothing novel in this way of treating the "To be, or not to be." English actors have deliv-

ered this soliloquy in every conceivable manner. It has been ranted and chanted and muttered and jerked out in occasional mouthfuls as if the Dane was suffering from an impediment of speech. And for every manner there has been an elaborate system of reasoning to show that each is the only correct way, the way Shakspeare himself would have read the passage.

Barnay's treatment of this soliloquy, however, seems to be in harmony with his conception of Hamlet. The Prince he presents is a man of energy, possessed of great nervous force, a man of action seemingly inert and reflective under the force of a spell. This may be the Hamlet of Shakspeare.

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#### SCENE WITH OPHELIA.

(Davies): The assumed madness with Ophelia was, by Garrick, in my opinion, too boisterous. He should have remembered that he was reasoning with a young lady, to whom he had professed the tenderness of passion. Wilks retained enough of disguised madness, but, at the same time, preserved the feelings of a lover, and the delicacy of a gentleman. Barry was not so violent as Garrick, and was, consequently, nearer to the intention of the author. Sheridan, Smith and Henderson have all, in this scene, avoided a manner too outrageous.

EDMUND KEAN (Hazlitt): Had there been less vehemence of effort in Kean's remonstrance with Ophelia, the scene would not have lost any of its effect. But whatever nice faults might be found in this scene they were amply redeemed by the manner of his coming back

after he had gone to the extremity of the stage, from a pang of parting tenderness to press his lips to Ophelia's hand. It had an electrical effect upon the house. It was the finest commentary ever made on Shakspeare. It explained the character at once (as he meant it) as one of disappointed hope, of bitter regret, of affection suspended and not obliterated by the distractions of the scene around him.

(Hackett): After the words "To a nunnery, go!" and departing abruptly out of sight of his audience, Kean came on the stage again and approached slowly the amazed Ophelia still remaining in the centre, took her hand gently, and, after gazing steadily and earnestly in her face for a few seconds, and with a marked expression of tenderness in his own countenance, appeared to be choked in his efforts to say something, smothered her hand with passionate kisses and rushed wildly and finally from her presence.

KEMBLE (Boaden): Kemble spoke the word "lisp" with one "lithp," a refinement below him.

THE ELDER BOOTH (Gould): In spite of the set purpose, his deep love burst forth in jets of passionate tenderness. He spoke with wildness rather than with serenity. He was in constant action; striding across the stage; passing out, still speaking, and beginning the next speech before he reëntered. Only when imploring her to go to nunnery did he pause in action, then approaching her tenderly, he threw into those oft-repeated words "to a nunnery, go," the whole force of his fervent affection.

(Mr. Gould thinks there is no warrant for Hamlet's catching glimpses of the King and his minister at espial; but that all Hamlet's speeches can be otherwise accounted for.)

FECHTER (Kate Field): Very beautiful and equally original was Hamlet's scene with Ophelia. He was a lover the moment his eyes fell upon her, and he cast aside every semblance of madness until Ophelia returned his letters, when the change of Fechter's expression was as great as the change of language; but when listening to the gentle maiden's reproaches there was pictured such agonized regret at throwing away every chance of happiness, as made the heart ache. When reference was made to the power of beauty, Fechter paused, looked sadly at the letters in his hand and then added, "but *now* the time gives it proof." The confession "I did love you once," was given with tearful eyes and choked utterance. When Ophelia exclaimed, "I was the more deceived," Fechter's tender action unseen by her, denoted that he *must* fold her in his arms; but forced to restrain, he honestly, earnestly begged her to get to a nunnery, as the only sanctuary worthy of her. Then seeing Polonius, he to test Ophelia's truthfulness, asked, "Where's your father?" and finding her false, burst into frenzied raving intended far more for the ears of her father than for the helpless creature trembling before him. Again subdued by love, Hamlet approached Ophelia with extended arms, almost embraced her, but, recollecting that he was watched by Polonius, cried pathetically, "To a nunnery, go," and rushed off the stage thoroughly overcome. In this



scene Fechter did not allow himself to see the King, for this espionage would so convince him of his uncle's guilt as to render the play unnecessary.

MACREADY caused both the King and Polonius to appear and to make some noise in retreating so as to attract the attention of Hamlet. Mr. Hackett thought it unreasonable that the King should show himself at all, and inconsistent for Hamlet, who had been striving in various ways to divert the King from any suspicion that he was watching him, to walk up close to the place of concealment and vociferate his parting speech — one evidently intended to be but partly heard even by Ophelia — the threat respecting the King, "Those that are married already (all but one) shall live," etc.

SALVINI (Lewes): The scene with Ophelia was a revelation. Instead of roaring and scolding at her like other actors, with a fierce rudeness which is all the more incomprehensible that they do not represent Hamlet as mad, Salvini is strange, enigmatical, but always tender; and his advice "To a nunnery, go," is the mournful advice of a heart-broken lover, not the insult of a bully or an angry pedagogue.

WILSON BARRETT (*Dramatic Notes*): Mr. Barrett was quite free from all show of tenderness in the scene with Ophelia, a somewhat remarkable point, as in this he differs from nearly all previous Hamlets.

ROSSI (William Winter): The drift of the scene with Ophelia was confused, as to the element of madness, by having Polonius momentarily discovered in the middle

of it, instead of showing him at the beginning. Either the paroxysm is real, and is brought on by Ophelia's repulse, or it is assumed, out of a consciousness of the treacherous ambushade. It cannot be both at once. The telling quality here was the despairing tenderness toward Ophelia.

EDWIN BOOTH (Lucia Gilbert Calhoun, 1865): The scene is handsomely set as an audience-chamber. A stately, double staircase leads to a gallery, from which small doors open on the corridors without. In a deep, embayed window Ophelia kneels. From a low-arched door beneath the stairway glides the Prince, his head bent, his hands clasped before him, his step slow and uncertain. He steadies himself by the balustrade, moves on again mechanically, is stopped by a chair, sinks into it, still silent, utterly absorbed. In another moment the "To be, or not to be" is uttered in a voice at first almost inaudible. Rising suddenly and crossing toward the window, he sees Ophelia. His whole face changes. A lovely tenderness suffuses it. Sweetness fills his tones as he addresses her. When, with exquisite softness of manner, he draws nearer to her, he catches a glimpse of the "lawful espials" in the gallery above. When he says suddenly, "Where's your father?" he lays his hand on Ophelia's head, and turns her face up to his as he stands above her. She answers, looking straight into the eyes that love her, "At home, my Lord." No accusation, no reproach could be so terrible as the sudden plucking away of his hand and the pain of his face as he turns from her. The whole scene he plays as one distract. He is never still. He strides up

and down the stage, in and out at the door, speaking outside with the same rapidity and vehemence. The speech "I have heard of your paintings," he begins in the outer room, and the contemptuous words hiss as they fall. "It hath made me mad," was uttered with a flutter of the hand about the head more expressive than words. As he turned toward Ophelia for the last time, all the bitterness, all the reckless violence seemed to die out of him; his voice was full of unutterable love, of appealing tenderness, of irrevocable doom, as he uttered the last, "To a nunnery, go!" and tottered from the room as one who could not see for tears.

HENRY IRVING (Lady Hardy): His tender, nay, passionate love for Ophelia, breaks through all bounds; his stern resolution, wherewith he holds it in bonds of iron, cannot keep it down; his nervous hands tremble at the touch of her garments; we see that, against his will, his whole soul goes out to her; his face is alive with passion; he loses himself in his emotions; he struggles to tear himself away from her, but again and again, as by a human magnet, he is drawn back; in a storm of feelings he flings harsh words at the fair young creature, while his heart is breaking for love of her; and even as his outspread hands are raised to thrust her from him, his eyes cling despairingly to her face. One moment we feel he must close longing arms around her, or fall sobbing at her feet; the next he thrusts her from him, and with a "*soupçon de brutalité*" as cruel as it is cowardly, overwhelms her with satirical scorn, and shrinks shuddering away, bidding her "go to a nunnery."

(Edward R. Russell, 1875): When he begins to talk with Ophelia, he is on his guard. An instinct warns him to shun the distractions and wooings of the passion. Yet the fair Ophelia is before him, and the love of forty thousand brothers is in his heart. He has no shield, no disguise, but his antic disposition, and he puts it on. The rule with modern Hamlets is to pretend to be mad later, when they have perceived the "lawful espials." This is not Irving's idea. It is in the coolness of the opening conversation that he affects the forgetfulness, the eccentricity, the insensibility of derangement. The excitement, however, as it mounts, is too much for him. Then suddenly he sees Polonius and the King, and the climax comes. But not in the shape of pretended madness. Rather does his lunacy become all but real and pronounced. "Let the doors be shut on him"—these are the last words he can say with any degree of sanity. His first sudden "farewell" is a frantic ebullition of all-encompassing, all-racking pain. What was till now histrionic, passes, as the histrionic phase of highly strung natures easily does, into real frenzy. His words come faster and wilder. His eyes flash with a more sinister lightning as he gives Ophelia the plague of inevitable calumny for her dowry. Again "farewell," and now he rushes forth, but only to return laden, as it were, with a new armful of hastily-gathered missiles of contumely. He is getting now to the very leavings of his mind. He has nothing to hurl at his love but the commonplaces of men against women. A flash of frenzy, and he has quitted the scene.

LOUIS JAMES (E. A. Dithmar): Mr. James's Hamlet

goes off the scene three times during the colloquy with Ophelia, only to return and renew h's imprecations; the result is an artistic botch, and four rounds of applause from the gallery.

CHARLES KEAN (Michael Nugent in *London Times*, 1838): Mr. Kean was wholly different from any person we have ever seen before in the character. There was violence enough in his manner to justify the grossly lascivious King in saying,

“Love! his affections do not that way tend.”

but there was also enough of tenderness and delicacy to show to tenderer and more delicate minds that his very heart-strings were breaking while in his assumed frenzy he was saying unkind things to one whom he entirely loved.

(Cole): We believe Charles Kean was the first actor of Hamlet of any note who gave up the old traditional custom of having a stocking “downgyved to the ankle,”—a piece of literal rendering sufficiently vulgar and certainly “more honored in the breach than in the observance.”

KEMBLE (Cole): John Kemble wore an elephant suspended by a blue ribbon from his neck, and a modern star on his cloak like that belonging to an English order of knighthood. The Order of the Elephant was instituted by Christiern, who began to reign in 1448, whereas the action of Hamlet was several centuries earlier. Besides, if it were proper for Hamlet to have this effeminate appendage of a badge and ribbon, then the King ought to be decorated after the same fashion.

JAMES E. MURDOCH: My first appearance in the character of Hamlet was in the Park Theatre, New York, in 1845, where my friend, Mr. Thomas Barry, was the stage-manager. Mr. Barry was one of the Kemble-school, and in his own acting much given to a stately style of speech and bearing. Hamlet, in his mind, was not only to be dressed in black, but "steeped to the very lips in gloom," sombre in mood, and grave and deliberate in utterance and gait. The even tenor of his princely demeanor was never to be disturbed by the slightest manifestation of levity, or even thoughtlessness, no matter how much the language of the part might suggest such departure. I remember his astonishment when I told him that I did not intend to wear a black plume, and that it reminded me of the decoration of a hearse. "Why, my dear sir," said he, "had you ever seen John Philip Kemble in that character, as he stood in the glare of the court attired in his suit of sables, grand and gloomy, with his noble features shaded by the dark waving plumes of his hat, you would never consent to trust yourself to the bald effect of an uncovered head."

BERNHARDT (Knight): When first seen in her father's house, looking stately and beautiful as Guinevere, holding the small framework on which she is weaving a pattern of flowers or birds, she is passionately in love with Hamlet, and ripely content with the declaration that she has just received of his returned affection. To justify this faith the poetical epistle of Hamlet, which in the English play is read in a later scene to the King and Queen by Polonius, is introduced in the second scene

and is read by Ophelia to Polonius, who is questioning his daughter concerning the intentions of Hamlet. Concerning these Ophelia has no doubt. Radiant and rapturous in self-content, she bends down, her eyes brimming with happiness, and listens with no thought of doubt or mistrust to the suggestions of her brother and the more outspoken counsels of her father. In proportion as her faith in Hamlet is firm at the outset, her perplexity and grief at his sudden withdrawal of his affections are tearful. That his brain is touched she knows, but she is none the less distracted at his bearing. With eyes streaming with tears she listens to his cruel words, throwing herself finally in front of a picture of the Virgin, whose intercession she piteously invokes. As a picture of love and distress, this is delicious. It has, however, little to do with Hamlet.

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### INSTRUCTIONS TO THE PLAYERS.

(Davies): Wilks, I believe, never spoke the speech to the players, and I conjecture it was omitted from the death of Betterton till the good taste of Garrick revived it. Garrick delivered these theatrical precepts with more force than propriety; but he did not accompany them with the condescending quality expected from the high-bred man of rank. He rather sustained the office of stage-manager, and consummate master of the art, than that of the generous friend and princely monitor. Mr. Henderson has, in this scene, less of the pedagogue and more of the gentleman.

KEMBLE (Boaden): On the first night of his Hamlet, Mr. Kemble omitted the instructions to the players upon the modest principle that he must first be admitted a master in the faculty before he presumed to censure the faults of others. He restored them afterward and gave the lesson very divertingly, "Some of Nature's journeymen," with an arch smile, and becoming graver as he followed it by "they imitated humanity so abominably."

FECHTER was the first to introduce a boy with chop-pins in lieu of a woman actress.

MACREADY:

"They are coming to the play; I must be idle."

Macready here danced before the footlights, flirting a white handkerchief over his head, for which he was hissed by Forrest.

THE ELDER BOOTH retired up the stage, passed from view, and reappearing like a shadow, was last in the company that enters to witness the play.

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### THE PLAY-SCENE.

"It was a brute part of him," etc.

MACREADY: Macready, behind the screen of assumed madness, insulted the old courtier and Lord Chamberlain in presence of the court, instead of muttering the latter part of the sentence to himself (as Hackett thought would have been better).



GARRICK threw out as unnecessary rant the line,

“The croaking raven bellows for revenge.”

KEMBLE gave the argument of the play in the finest manner possible.

EDMUND KEAN (Hazlitt): The manner in which Mr. Kean acted in the scene of the play before the King and Queen was the most daring of any, and the force and animation which he gave to it cannot be too highly applauded. Its extreme boldness “bordered on the verge of all we hate,” and the effect it produced was the test of the extraordinary powers of an extraordinary actor.

THE ELDER BOOTH (Gould): In 1831, when Charles Kean played Hamlet in the Baltimore Theatre, Junius Brutus Booth, being temporary manager, took the part of “the second actor,” having only six lines to say. Every word of the fearful lines dropped poison. The weird music of his voice, and the stealthy yet decisive action, made this brief scene the memorable event of the night.

MACREADY (Hackett): “Oh, they do but *jest*. POISON in jest!” etc. Mr. Macready, under a comic guise, brought out that interjection with great pungency and admirable effect.

JOHN VANDENHOFF (Hackett): In the play-scene, while Lucianus was reciting his last speech and preparing to poison the player-King, Mr. Vandenhoff, as Hamlet, began to creep catlike across the stage, and, thus approaching the footstool of his uncle-King, just as the

actor-murderer had finished his invocation and commenced pouring poison into his victim's ear, struck Claudius a smart blow upon his knee with Ophelia's fan, and, rising simultaneously, with violent gesticulation, vociferated,

"He poisons him in the garden for his estate,"  
which sent the King packing, as well it might.

FECHTER (Kate Field): Hamlet gazed fondly at Ophelia when announcing the court's coming to the play, showing first the lover before putting on the mask. He never forgot to spare Polonius in the presence of others. "I was killed i' the capitol; Brutus killed me," maunders the old man. "It was a brute part of him," Hamlet replied, and then walking away, added as an aside, "to kill so capital a calf—*there*."

"Nay, then, let the devil wear black 'fore I'll have a suit of sables," was Fechter's rendering, authorized by the folio.

Most Hamlets insult Ophelia by hurling the reply, "as woman's love," at her. Fechter gave it as if communing with his own thoughts, and looked the while at his mother.

"That's wormwood," was addressed to Horatio; and "If she should break it now," to King and Queen.

During the play Fechter, play-book before him, followed the text closely, thus anticipating it and watching the effect upon the royal pair. Discovery made and audience gone, Fechter tore the leaves from the play-book and scattered them in the air as he rose and delivered the quatrain with rapid utterance, growing thick under increased excitement; he put his hand to his throat as if choking; "ah, ha!" became a gasp; he

leaned upon Horatio, and, for relief, for solace, called for music. Upon the entrance of Guildenstern and Rosencrantz he fell into a chair exhausted, until his mother's name was mentioned, when out of courtesy he rose. Guildenstern, with the locket about his neck, was more hateful to Hamlet than the less treacherous Rosencrantz. He snubs Guildenstern, and addressed "my mother, you say," to Rosencrantz, who immediately takes up the thread of the argument.

(J. H. Fitzpatrick): Fechter's "play-scene" was especially elaborate and imposing. A conception of the magnitude of its detail may be faintly realized when we state that it was composed of more than 250 separate set pieces and appointments, taking fifty men twenty minutes to set it. It was painted by the celebrated painter, Mr. Telbin. The scene was one grand pageant.

SALVINI (Lewes): The growing intensity of emotion during the play-scene culminates in a great outburst of tremendous rage as he wildly flings into the air the leaves of the manuscript he had been biting a second before, and falls exhausted on Horatio's neck.

GARRICK (Davies): "For some must laugh, etc." In the uttering of this line and a half it was Garrick's constant practice to pull out a white handkerchief, and walking about the stage twirl it round with vehemence.

WILSON BARRETT: The play-scene was arranged to take place on the very spot in the garden where the real murder occurred. Mr. Clement Scott says: "The idea of the play-scene occurring in the open air so grows on the spectator that it will be strange if it is not always so

represented. To make it perfect the innovation might have gone further, and introduced, in addition to the procession of players and attendants passing to the show, a splendid procession of King, Queen and court threading their way by torchlight with music to the appointed spot in the garden where the temporary platform is erected. There is one very strong point in favor of the out-of-door play-scene, namely, the interview with Polonius in which Hamlet points out to him the clouds in the heavens. When done in a room with a roof over it, it has always appeared absurd."

Barrett stood aloft on the mimic stage as he declaimed on the confusion and departure of the King, and then sank exhausted into Horatio's arms.

ROSSI (William Winter): In the play-scene Hamlet was very full of theatrical antics; offensive to Polonius; insolent to the King; turbulent to Ophelia; obstreperous; manifestly to all about him putting an affront upon his sovereign; and thoroughly melodramatic in demeanor; and at the climax he headed off the fugacious King, with the alacrity of a lad in a game of baseball—so that His Majesty screamed in his face.

EDWIN BOOTH (Lucia Gilbert Calhoun, 1865): During the court-play, Hamlet lies at Ophelia's feet, watching the guilty King with ever fiercer regard. As the action proceeds he creeps toward him, and, as the mimic murder is accomplished, he springs up with a cry like an avenging spirit. It seemed to drive the frightened court before it. In an instant he is alone with Horatio, and staggering forward he falls on his neck with the long, loud, mirthless laugh of a madman. When he



ROSSI.



lifts his face it is one over which ten years have passed, yet with a fierce gladness upon it as of a man to whom a blocked way is open, though it lead through blood.

HENRY IRVING (Edward R. Russell, 1875): Before the spectators enter, his demeanor is not subtle and contriving, but anxious, and his looks are haggard. He has set more than his life upon the cast. But when the King and Queen and courtiers enter, he becomes gay and insouciant. Ophelia's fan, with which he plays, is of peacock's feathers, and as he lies at her feet, patting his breast with it, at the words: "Your Majesty and we that have free souls," the feathers themselves are not lighter than his spirits seem. In his double-meaning replies to the King there is none of that malignant significance with which it is the custom of Hamlets to discount the coming victory. His "no offence i' the world," is said drily, and that is all. His watching of the King is not conspicuous. He does not crawl prematurely toward him or seize his robe. Even up to the crisis, although his excitement rises, his spirits bear him almost sportively through. But when once the King and Queen start from their chairs Hamlet springs from the ground, darts with a shrill scream to the seats from which they vanished like ghosts, flings himself—a happy thought—into the chair which the King had vacated, his body swaying the while from side to side in irrepressible excitement, and recites there the well known: "Why let the stricken deer go weep." A still greater, because wild and bizarre, effect follows, as Hamlet leaves the chair, and in a sort of jaunty, nonsense rhythm, chants the seldom-used lines:

“For thou dost know, O Damon dear,  
This realm dismantled was  
Of Jove himself, and now reigns here  
A very, very—peacock.”

At the last word, said suddenly, after a pause, he looks at Ophelia's fan, which he has kept till now, and throws it away, as if it had suggested a word and was done with.

BERNHARDT (Knight): In the play-scene, Mme. Bernhardt yields for the moment to the delusion that Hamlet's love has returned, and that matters are once more right. In obedience to her own suggestion Hamlet lies almost in her lap. His head, which rests on her knees, she gently fans, and she stoops over him with a caressing affection which renders her insensible to the presence of her father and the court. Soon, however, perceiving that whatever else is occupying his attention, it is not herself, she turns listlessly to the play, and watches it until the King's fright and the passionate outbreak of Hamlet send her, in common with the rest of the company, scared from the chamber.

GARRICK (Cole): Garrick, with all his genius, was a very methodical actor; when he had once settled on what was the business of a part, he never altered it. In the play-scene, when he has satisfied himself that he has detected the guilt of the King, he wound up his burst of exultation at the close by three flourishes of his pocket handkerchief over his head, as he paced the stage backward and forward. It was once remarked as an extraordinary deviation, that he added a fourth flourish.



## AFTER THE PLAY.

MACREADY (Hackett): "With drink, sir." Instead of an interrogation he uttered the words rapidly and in a tone of exclamation, denoting an unquestionable conclusion.

ROSSI (London *Athenæum*, 1876) Hamlet, in speaking to Guildenstern, says: "There is much music, excellent voice in this little organ, yet cannot you make it speak." Instead of representing, as is customary, the recorder as the little organ, Signor Rossi slaps his chest as though it was his own voice to which reference was made.

KEMBLE: The reference to Rosencrantz after Guildenstern with the pipe: "I do beseech *you*," was considered a Kemble innovation. Boaden thought that actor's stately march from one to the other a poor thing, chilling what was to follow, and too formal for the condition of Hamlet's mind.

(HACKETT thought that in the interview with Polonius when he brings a message from the Queen, Hamlet should show irritation at the repetition of the message, already received from Rosencrantz and Guildenstern; and after the "Very like a whale," of Polonius, Hamlet, upon finding that Polonius will agree to everything he suggests, reciprocates the courtesy and dismisses him with:

"Then, I will come to my mother, by and by,"

and, turning away from him, and walking toward the other side of the stage, soliloquizes respecting his own

vexation: "They fool me to the top of my bent," and naturally supposing that Polonius, to whom he had already given an answer, had gone with it in haste to his mother, Hamlet is about to resume his invective against the courier when he turns and perceives Polonius standing just where he was when he had given him his answer; and also still gaping at him in stupid amazement; whereupon Hamlet ought to approach Polonius and repeat loudly and peevishly and syllabically distinct:

"I will *come* BY and BY!" .

in order that Polonius, now no longer unable to comprehend Hamlet's desire for his departure, may withdraw, as he does presently, saying: "I will *say* so!" upon which Hamlet abruptly remarks: "By and by is *easily* said!" denoting: "If you understand my answer which is so simple and easily carried, why don't you go along about it.")

FORREST: These words to Polonius: "Do you see yonder cloud?" were addressed to him at the wing, pointing off the side-scene or through a window.

THE ELDER BOOTH (Gould): In two lines of the short soliloquy which ends the scene, the tragedian indicated by a master-piece of intonation and expression the span and sweep of Hamlet's nature; the restraining force of will acting as counterpoise to the momentum of his feelings:

"Soft, now to my mother.

O heart, lose not thy nature, let not ever

The soul of Nero enter this firm bosom."

The thought of Nero's crime seemed suddenly to occur to him, to fill him with horror, and to lend the

word Nero a surprising repulsion of gesture and emphasis.

WILSON BARRETT (*Shakspeariana*): One of the most effective bits of silent acting Mr. Barrett gives when, after dismissing his watchers and sending back Polonius who has brought him his mother's message to come to her, left alone in the deserted garden, he looks cautiously around him everywhere, whips out his sword, runs it ahead of him in the shadows of the porch he must pass through, looks back and around again, and then with naked blade drawn, goes to meet his mother.

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#### THE KING IN HIS CLOSET.

(Davies): Some eminent actors, such as Keen, Quin and Hulet, have not disdained to represent this character. When Ryan, at Lincoln's-inn-fields Theatre, appeared in Hamlet, to give strength to the play, Quin and Walker acted the inferior parts of the King and Horatio, and retained them from 1719 to 1734.

(The first actor who rejected the soliloquy of Hamlet's deferring the punishment of the King, lest his soul go to Heaven, was Mr. Garrick.)

ROSSI: The actors and stage-managers—I have met many such in England, America and Germany—who omit this scene (the King in his closet), commit a vandalism, not only by “cutting” a momentous episode of the tragedy, containing two essential monologues—that of Hamlet, inspired by spiritual philosophy, and that of Claudius, the outcome of philosophical materialism—

and explaining Hamlet's passivity toward his uncle, but by consigning to oblivion a scene intimately connected with the final catastrophe, when Hamlet slays the King by steel and poison, and at an instant's notice, so as not to give the sinner time for contrition, whereby he might obtain divine forgiveness.

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### THE CLOSET-SCENE WITH THE QUEEN-MOTHER.

GARRICK (Davies): Garrick here had an ample field to display that fine expression of countenance, energy of speech and warmth of passion, for which he was so justly admired. To argumentative reproof he gave full vigor; nor was he deficient in those filial regards which a son should feel for a mother unhappily misled. His address to the Ghost was reverentially awful, as well as transcendently moving. His eye marked with grief and filial love, pursued the melancholy Shade to its exit. His recovery from that situation was characteristically striking, and his filial exhortation to his mother ardent and pathetic. Except in the delicacy of address to a lady, in which Wilks and Barry excelled all mortals, Garrick was in this scene a most proficient Hamlet.

WILKS (Davies): If Addison and Cibber justly blamed Wilks for his behavior to the Ghost in the first act, they could not possibly censure his conduct with his mother in the third. His action was indeed a happy mixture of warm indignation, tempered with the most

affecting tenderness. His whole deportment was princely and graceful; when he presented the pictures, the reproaches his animation produced were guarded with filial reluctance; and when he came to that pathetic expostulation of

“Mother, for love of grace!”

there was something in his manner inexpressibly gentle and powerfully persuasive.

KEMBLE: “Is it the King?” was addressed by Kemble to the million. It was doubted whether in speaking daggers to the Queen, they were drawn and sharp enough. Boaden thought greater keenness would have been unfilial; and as if he took delight in the task which only stern necessity imposed upon him.

Kemble knelt in the adjuration to his mother. An objection was taken that the passage is preceptive, rather supplicating. Boaden thought not. As an affectionate son, Hamlet is endeavoring to awake all the feelings of the mother in her to combat the delusion of her guilty attachment. The more endearing his urgency, the more strictly natural.

KEMBLE:

“And when you are desirous to *be* blest  
I’ll blessing *beg* of you.”

HENDERSON:

“And when you are desirous to *be blest*  
I’ll blessing beg of *you*.”

(Davies): It has been the constant practice of the stage ever since the Restoration, for Hamlet, in this scene, to produce from his pocket, two pictures in little, of his father and uncle, not much larger than two large coins

or medallions. How the graceful attitude of a man could be given in a miniature, I can not conceive.

(Furness): The original practice of the stage seems to have been to have the two pictures hanging in the Queen's closet. They are so represented in a print prefixed to Rowe's *Hamlet*, published in 1709. Afterward it became the fashion for Hamlet to take two miniatures from his pocket; but as Hamlet would not be likely to carry his uncle's picture in that way, a Bath actor suggested snatching it from his mother's neck. Another arrangement was to have the new King's picture hanging on the wall, while Hamlet took his father's from his bosom. Fitzgerald, in his *Life of Garrick*, suggested that the pictures be seen with the mind's eye only; and this is followed by Irving and Salvini. Fechter tears the King's miniature from the Queen's neck, and throws it away. Edwin Booth makes use of two miniatures, taking one from his own neck and the other from the Queen's.

EDWIN BOOTH (*New York Sun*, 1889): Upon Booth's long since perfected Hamlet there is no new praise to bestow, and there would hardly be a new comment to make were it not for the great actor's variable treatment of the chamber-interview with the Queen. His reading remains unaltered, in so much as the smallest pause or the slightest inflection; but in the accompanying gestures and poses he seems to seek relief in his work by frequent changes. Sometimes he refers to "the counterfeit presentment of two brothers" as being portraits on the walls, sometimes as medallions worn by his mother and himself, and sometimes they are wholly

imaginary. This week he has the dead King's likeness in a panel of the room, and the live King's on the Queen's breast. All through the scene he alters the motions in many ways, and particularly while gazing at the apparition which his mother fails to see.

HENRY IRVING (in *Nineteenth Century*, Feb., 1879): It may be reasonably urged that there is a striking evidence in the text itself that this portrayal of the two brothers was a purely imaginative operation, for the phrase, "Look you here—what follows"—(this expression is most significant), surely rather indicates a chain of argument which Hamlet is about to set forth, and to enforce by the most vivid illustrations which his perfect mind could furnish, than that he is going to point out what is already before his mother's eyes. The practical difficulties in the way of a literal conformity with the text offer a complete justification for an actor's departure from it. It is not a question of violating the poet's ideal, but of choosing from amongst certain effects those which will create the most vivid impression. If the pictures are to be in full view of the audience they must be placed on the further wall of the chamber, and the actor in describing them must face them and so turn his back upon the spectators, whose attention will thus be distracted from Hamlet's words. If they be placed at the side or on opposite sides, they can be but partially seen, and then not by the entire house. It should never be forgotten that the stage has four walls, though the fourth is only theoretical, and I believe it to be in every sense advantageous that the audience should be left to imagine, if they like, either that the pictures are on this

fourth wall, or that Hamlet is painting them from his imagination. Whichever view be adopted, the result, then, is that the mind is concentrated upon the impressive image of the poet, instead of being diverted from it by some mechanical device. The notoriously hazardous character of stage-portraits especially in these realistic days, disposes me to contend that my method satisfies the acquirements of the situation. Signor Salvini, one of the most accomplished of actors, on seeing my method, paid me the compliment of adopting it in preference to that which he had originally practised. I venture to think that this is one of those points of detail on which Shakspeare himself would have allowed a large discretion to the actor. No one had less scruple than he in departing from strict realism when it ceased to be effectual, and I think he would be surprised, were he to return to earth, by the reverence for his supposed intentions displayed by the distinguished *dilettante* manager—stage-manager—who in a comparatively recent revival of “Hamlet,” gravely introduced into “another part of the platform” what seemed to be a counterfeit presentment of a crane—presumably to indicate the commercial genius of the Danes.

ROSSI: With respect to the comparison between the two portraits, I ventured, after mature reflection, upon the innovation of substituting, for the pictures traditionally affixed to the walls of Gertrude’s bedroom, medallions, that of the late King suspended to Hamlet’s neck, and that of Claudius hanging upon the Queen’s bosom. My reasons for doing so were: First, the absolute non-existence of scenic decorations in Shakspeare’s time ren-



dering it highly probable that the pictures were worn by the mother and son respectively; second, because it seemed to me absolutely natural that the bereaved son should wear his dead father's likeness near his heart, and that the faithless widow should wear about her the portrait of her second husband; third, because it was out of the question that Claudius, the fratricide, should have endured the continual presence of his murdered brother's image in his wife's bedroom; and last, because of the excellent effect produced by Hamlet when he tramples on the locket containing his uncle's counterfeit presentment. The comparison between the dead hero and the living assassin, as effected by means of these two portraits, is a deeply emotional "effect," as well as a poetical episode of exquisite pathos.

THE ELDER BOOTH (Gould): The strong current, the earnest pleading, the impassioned conscience, the noble purpose, the intense personal life, made manifest in this scene, might serve as a study for those who, impressed by a single trait in this "abstract and brief chronicle" of civilized man—this Hamlet—weakly conclude him to be full of weakness, and of a melancholy born of weakness.

"Mother, *you* have—*my* father—much offended."

"Come, come, and sit you down; you shall not budge;  
You go not, till I set you up a glass  
Where you may see the *in*-most part of you."

He had already said:

"I will *speak*—*daggers* to her."

That word "*inmost*" touched the core of the matter. The sound of it, greatly prolonged on the first syllable, was like a searching probe of steel. After he had killed Polonius, he gave separately each word of the line:

"Thou wretched, rash, intruding fool, farewell!"

and all with ascending emphasis, in tones of mingled grief and anger, and as if dashed with tears.

Looking on the picture of his father he says:

"Where *every* god did seem to set his seal.  
This—*was*—your husband

*[kissing the picture and in voice that sheathed affection for his father, in reprobation for his mother]:*

"Look you now, what follows."

*[with startling change of manner]:*

"Here is—s—s your husband, like a mildewed ear,  
Blasting his wholesome brother."

The words of this phrase were shaken and eddied over by one continuing flood of tone; in obedience to a passionate method most expressive and peculiar to this actor.

At the opportune moment, when the heat of his indignation finds expression thus:

"A murderer and a villain,  
A cut-purse of the empire and the rule,"

the Ghost appears. There seemed to pass over Booth's features an instant baptism of devotion. All anger vanished. The outreaching and imploring look in his full blue eyes, arching the inner angles of the brows, gave the face a terrible exaltation, as he began that strange colloquy between Hamlet, his guilty mother, and his father's Spirit, with the words:

"What would your gracious figure?"

During the presence of the Ghost, until just before its exit at the opposite door, Booth stood rooted to the spot from which he first saw it; stood with steady gaze, outstretched hands, and such pathetic reverence of voice and action, that though we looked and listened then in

a mood above weeping, yet the memory of it surprises us as we write, "unto the brink of tears."

GHOST: Speak to her, Hamlet.

HAMLET: (*Still looking at the Ghost*) How is it with you, lady?

QUEEN: Whereon do you look?

HAMLET: *On him; On him*

(*as if the question were idle; as if she must see the figure also*).

In the oft-quoted passage —

"Assume a virtue, if you have it not."

Booth paused after the word "virtue," then uttered the words, "if you have it not," as if a spring of love gushed in his heart, and he caught at a hope that she *might* have repented already.

FORREST (Alger): The closet-scene with the Queen-mother, as Forrest played it, was a model of justness. He began in a respectful and sorrowing tone. Gradually as he dwelt on her faithlessness to his father, and her loathsome sensuality, his glowing memory and burning words wrought him up to vehement indignation, and he appeared on the point of offering violence, when the Ghost reappeared with warning signal and message. The suddenness of change in his manner—pallor of face, shrunken shoulders, fixed dilation of eyes—was electrifying; and when in response to the Queen's

"O, Hamlet, thou hast cleft my heart in twain," he said,

O, throw away the worser part of it,  
And live the purer with the other half.  
Good-night; but go not to my uncle's bed;  
Assume a virtue, if you have it not,"

he compressed into his utterance, in one indescribable mixture, a world of entreaty, command disgust, grief, deference, love and mournfulness.

EDWIN BOOTH (George William Curtis): In the chamber-scene with his mother, when the Ghost passes and Hamlet falls for a moment prostrate with emotion at his disappearance, the Queen insinuates that he is mad. There is a kind of calm, pitying disdain mingled with the sense that her feeling is natural, with which Hamlet steps toward her, his finger on his pulse. The tragedy in Hamlet is not only the vital curiosity about existence, the mastering love of life which almost subdues his soul with fear and doubt, and keeps it tense with eager questioning, but it is a conviction of a mind morbid with this continual strain that it is a most sacred duty to end another life, to plunge a guilty soul into the abyss of doubt, and that soul the one dearest to his mother. This explains the fascination which the idea of his uncle's death always exercises upon his mind, and also his inability to do more than dream and doubt over the action. It is this complication which produces one of Booth's finest scenes. In the interview with his mother he stabs Polonius through the arras. For an instant the possibility of what he has done sweeps over his mind. Always the victim of complex emotions, the instinctive satisfaction of knowing the act done is mingled with the old familiar horror of the doom to which he may have consigned his uncle. With sword uplifted, and a vague terror both of hope and fear in his face and tone, Hamlet does not slide rapidly back and hurriedly exclaim, "Is it the King?" but tottering with emotion he asks slowly in an appalling staccato, "Is it the King?"

ROSSI (William Winter): In the closet-scene the

killing of Polonius was done very badly; but, by dint of much bluster toward the Queen, and then of throwing away his sword, to show that no actual violence was intended, Signor Rossi contrived to make very good Bowery melodrama of this awful and beautiful passage, crowning his work by tearing off the Queen's miniature of her husband, and grinding it beneath his heel, in a pose of capital stage-fury.

(Laurence Hutton): In his first interview with the Ghost he betrays no fear, because he sees in it only the image of a lamented and beloved father, while in the scene with the Queen, when the Ghost appears, he crouches behind his mother's chair in abject terror, because, as he explains it, the phantom then is an embodiment of conscience, the ghost of a father whose mandate he has disobeyed.

EDWIN BOOTH (Lucia Gilbert Calhoun, 1865): Into the Queen's closet, where a single light burns in the sumptuous gloom, and a crucifix gleams against the wall, comes Hamlet. There is no anger in him as he first accosts his mother. There is the awful obligation to tell her truths which are a horror to him and a shame to her. It is the terrible, intense quiet of his tone and manner which frightens her more than violence would have done. At the shout of old Polonius he leaps like lightning to the arras. The wild hope of the cry: "Is it the King?" as he stands with the lamp he has snatched up flickering above his head and his hand on the parted arras, makes the air shudder. Looking down upon the old man he utters: "Thou wretched, rash, intruding

fool, farewell," with accumulating emphasis of bitterness, not more repenting the blow bestowed than deploring the failure of the blow intended. His reproaches to the Queen are terrible; but never brutal, and never loud. He himself trembles and shudders with the pain he gives, but never relents. He is pleading with her for her soul. Suddenly upon his sacred anger comes the Ghost in whose name he has spoken. For an instant of time terror touches him. Then a passion of tenderness sweeps over him. He reaches out his hands to the shadowy figure. His tones vibrate with love. When the Ghost says: "Speak to her, Hamlet," in the same state of double consciousness which marked his first interview with the Spirit, he puts his arm around the trembling woman of whose presence he has ceased to be aware. He is appalled to find that his mother sees nothing where stands this figure so real to him. He follows it with his eyes, and when it glides away he follows it as one who has no life apart from it—as it fades, falling like a dead thing across the threshold. Called back by his mother's voice to this hard life, a new pity for her softens his voice and manner. He dismisses her with gentleness. He would bear the burden of her sin if he could.

CHARLES KEAN (Hackett): One of his most admired and applauded points was produced after Hamlet had thrust violently through the arras in second stage entrance, left, slid ten or twelve feet upon the floor cloth down to the right centre of the stage, and then and there utter the words: "Is it the King?" with his loudest possible shout of exultation, utterly at variance with the pretext.

BANDMANN (London *Athenæum*, 1873): His addressing to the picture of Claudius the strong words employed by Hamlet in his interview with the Queen, has some ground of reason, but his sudden recoil and fall when the Ghost appears, and his delivery in a recumbent attitude of the address to his mother, are equally meaningless and ineffective.

FECHTER (Kate Field): Having killed Polonius, Fechter elaborated Shakspeare's few words by the agony of his experience at having made so fatal a mistake, by throwing away his sword that it might not be repeated.

The excitement produced by the Ghost's appearance yielded to regret at his departure; and there was tenderness toward the guilty mother who finally knelt before him, being raised up gently at the words, "Confess yourself to Heaven." When Hamlet bade her good-night, she attempted to bless him, but was firmly, not unkindly repelled. This action was followed by the lines,

"And when you are desirous to be blessed  
I'll blessing beg of you."

Before the sobbing Queen retires, she once more turns to her son, exclaiming, "Hamlet!" (this was Fechter's introduction) and stretched out her hands for a filial embrace. Hamlet held up his father's picture, and the wretched woman staggered from the stage. Kissing the picture, Hamlet murmured—

"I must be cruel only to be kind,"

then taking light in hand, and raising the arras, gazed at Polonius exclaiming,

"Thus bad begins, and worse remains behind."

(Mr. Hackett finds fault with all actors of Hamlet whom he had seen, in the application of the lines,

“I must be cruel only to be kind,  
Thus bad begins and worse remains behind.”

as follows: After the dialogue between Hamlet and his mother, as it is abridged and arranged for representation, when Hamlet utters the words:

“So again, good night.”

the Queen is required to approach Hamlet and to offer a parting embrace, at which Hamlet seems shocked, and shudders, and shrinks back with averted palms, and, pharisee-like, refuses to allow her; the Queen then seems convulsed, bursts into tears, and rushes off one way while Hamlet goes in the opposite direction, expressing first as an excuse for such unrelenting hard-heartedness the couplet quoted; whereas if we examine the original scene, and the order of Shakspeare's language, we find that this same couplet does not come in next after the last time of Hamlet's saying “Good night, mother,” but in the midst of his advice, reflections, and varied expostulations with his mother, and when the Ghost, conjured to his imaginative vision by the heat of his distemper, in the very witching time of night, had been dispelled by the sprinkling of cool patience, and his reasoning faculties had again resumed their sway. In the third line of the speech wherein the couplet occurs—after which he utters fifty more lines before he separates from his mother—he has interjected “good night,” as if for the purpose of hurrying her away, and with the object of securing a chance to secrete the body of Polonius; then adding some lines about virtue, etc., says: “Again, good night,” and, as an inducement for a



mother to become virtuous, and be in a condition to bless her son with a good grace, remarks in substance: When you by a reformation evince an anxiety to deserve a blessing of Heaven, I will beg a blessing of you. Mr. Hackett holds that there is no warrant for the Queen's offer to embrace Hamlet; certainly none for Hamlet's assuming to be so much holier than she was.

(Davies): The part of Hamlet's mother is a character of dignity not without a mixture of passion. Though of late our principal actresses have rejected Queen Gertrude, yet the skill of a good performer is requisite to fill up many of the theatrical situations with propriety. Without a proper support from the Queen, Hamlet's action in the last scene of the third act would lose half its force. Lady Slingsby, an actress of merit, was the first Hamlet's mother, I think, since the Restoration, when Mrs. Betterton acted Ophelia. Mrs. Porter was the Queen-mother of Wilks and Mrs. Hallam of Ryan. The universal applause Mrs. Pritchard commanded in this great interview with her son was thought by her a sufficient recompense for going through various attitudes of less consequence. Her attention to all the less and seemingly unimportant business of the Queen was so exact that Hamlet's mother was esteemed one of her prime characters. Mrs. Porter, though a greater actress in tragedy, did not excel her in Gertrude.

LUDWIG BARNAY (E. A. Dithmar): The closet-scene lacks the solemnity and dignity that belong to it. At its close Hamlet takes his erring mother in his arms and then lets her fall backward upon a pile of cushions while he proceeds to business with the body of Polonius lying

in sight of the spectators. The Polonius of the night was Possart, whose choice of that character seems to be a mere freak. He made the chamberlain a sincere, pathetic, old man in the scene with Laertes and Ophelia, and was mildly amusing thereafter, except when he came out of his closet and died all over the floor. Then he was excessively disagreeable. Possart might better have tried the King, a part that all actors of established position seem to avoid.

LOUIS JAMES (E. A. Dithmar): His Hamlet, like Lawrence Barrett's, ends the closet-scene by blubbering in his mother's arms, an act entirely inconsistent with Hamlet's character, and wholly at variance with the text.

KEMBLE (Serjeant John Adams): If I remember right, John Kemble's hand was always on his mother's arm—his eyes fixed on him—his own on the Ghost; and when the Ghost desired him to address her, he did so mechanically, without looking at her or moving a muscle.

GARRICK (Davies): At the appearance of the Ghost, Hamlet immediately rises from his seat affrighted; at the same time he contrives to kick down his chair, which by making a sudden noise, it was imagined would contribute to the perturbation and terror of the incident. A poor stage-trick and should be avoided.

(Cole): Garrick, though a professed reformer, indulged freely in stage-trickery. It is recorded that in the closet-scene he had a mechanical contrivance by which his chair fell, as of itself, when he started upon the sudden entrance of the Ghost. Henderson, his im-

mediate successor in the part, rejected this practice, and the doing so was called a daring innovation.

HENRY IRVING (London *Theatre*): The closet-scene was enacted in a room adjoining the Queen's bed-chamber, and the Ghost passes through the door of the latter, as if to enforce the behest:

"Let not the royal bed of Denmark," etc.

Hence the Ghost appeared in a sort of robe, following the direction of the first quarto, "Enter the ghost in his night-gown," and in accordance with Hamlet's exclamation:

"My father in his habit as he lived."

WILSON BARRETT (*Shakspeariana*): In the scene in the Queen's chamber, Mr. Barrett takes his highest position. Determined "to speak daggers, but use none," his steady purpose "to be cruel only to be kind," commends itself at last, by its convincing earnestness, to the unhappy Queen, who sees her fault and even seems moved to unburden her degree of guilt, when Hamlet's delicate spirit waiving so unfilial an office, says:

"Confess yourself to HEAVEN,"

and dares make her a trusted partner of his intentions in continuing:

"Repent what's *past*, avoid what *is* to COME,"

at this word laying his hand significantly upon his sword. Again he tells her that when she is desirous to be blest, he'll "*blessing* beg of *her*." Then turning to the body of the spying Polonius he has thrust through, mistaking him for better prey, he says:

"For this same lord,  
I do repent! but Heaven hath pleased it so,

To *punish* ME with *this*, and THIS with *me*,  
That I must be their scourge and minister."

He continues lamenting:

"And I will *answer well*,  
The death I gave him,"

implying thus, that through Ophelia will he be thus afflicted, and through the trouble to which this is the prologue. After this almost reconciliation, the o'erstrained heart of Hamlet, as he stands to say, "Good night," o'er the slain body, breaks into uncontrollable sobs.

The King entering, finds in Polonius's death new cause of alarm, and when recalling the young prince, he returns cool and defiant, who had gone out a moment before broken and weeping, the anti-climax reached is excellent. Seeming to see that not yet may he attack the person of his hated uncle, his eye lights upon the picture of the King, which he has used before in his interview with his mother, and which he has thrown upon the floor, and he darts at it, and stamps upon it.

When the King asks: "Where is Polonius?" Hamlet tells him lightly: "In Heaven, send thither and see." Then adds deliberately and with the fiercest boldness: "If your messenger find him not there, seek him in the *other place* YOURSELF." Claudius rushes toward him at this, then Hamlet suddenly turns before his eyes the picture he wears, on the chain around his neck, of the murdered King, and his guilty successor sinks back at the sight of it like a cowed beast.

(Wilson Barrett): Since Betterton's time the actors have invariably finished the third act of Hamlet with the lines,

"I must be cruel, only to be kind;  
Thus bad begins, and worse remains behind."

What is the result of this arrangement? The fourth act commences with the meeting of the King and Queen. The King learns from her that Hamlet has just slain Polonius; he confides the secret to Rosencrantz and Guildenstern; they are sent to find the body of Polonius, and, before that task is accomplished, Ophelia enters, mad with grief for her father's death, of which she has never heard, and describes in her madness his funeral which has never taken place. Furthermore, Laertes enters and demands of the King, "Oh, thou vile King, give me my father," and goes on to talk of his "means of death—his obscure funeral." Obscure indeed, considering the fact that the body has not been found. Remember, too, that Laertes was in France when his father was murdered; that the news had to travel from Denmark to France; that Laertes had to journey from France to Denmark and stir up the rebellion which he guides and leads—and all this has been done in the few hours or rather minutes which elapse between the slaying of Polonius and the despatch of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern to find the body. Hamlet has been sent a moment before to England; ere he has had time to cross the courtyard of the castle, a letter is brought to the King from him, in which he says he has been "three days at sea;" has been captured by the pirates, and has been by them set naked on the shores of Denmark. What a jumble is here. And yet for generations this maltreatment of this glorious tragedy has been allowed to pass unquestioned. By finishing the act where Shakspeare meant it to be

finished—viz., after Hamlet's departure for England—we get the interregnum which the dramatist intended. Some six weeks have elapsed, there has been time to bury Polonius, time for Ophelia's grief to affect her brain; time for Laertes to travel from France, and time for Hamlet to be captured by the pirates at sea and be released again.

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#### ACT IV.—OPHELIA'S MADNESS.

BERNHARDT (Knight): Her performances in the fourth act, are, indeed in their way, matchless. In place of the outbursts of song to which Ophelia ordinarily gives way, Mme. Bernhardt delivers in a plaintive chant, a ballad concerning herself and her Valentine, which introduces some of the verses quoted by Shakspeare. Her mournful intonation and her startled gaze when Horatio crosses her path, though they do not reconcile one to the change that has been made, extort admiration. A full tribute of tears is accorded her in the scene with the wild flowers, which, instead of being braided in a coronal, descend in a falling spray with her hair. The action with which she accompanies the bestowal of each is, like the words she utters, charged with more significance than the original text warrants. A direct prophecy of evil to the King is thus delivered. Very striking, however, is the manner in which, after giving the Queen a bunch of rue, she, instead of taking from her gathered skirt a fresh spray to weave with the other flowers and herbs in her hair, snatches back a spray of that the Queen has taken. After her final departure

she is once more seen with her face rigid as marble and her body covered with flowers, carried on a bier to the churchyard.

MRS. SIDDONS (Campbell) : For her second benefit (May 15, 1786) this season, Mrs. Siddons played Ophelia. Having never seen her in the character, I must own that I cannot speak of her performance of it without some doubt. On the one hand, Mr. Boaden says that she made it deeply affecting; and the criticism of the press generally concurs in extolling her performance of it. It is also a striking circumstance, that her fellow-actress, who played the Queen, was so electrified by the Siddons's looks, when she seized her arm, that she hesitated, and forgot her part. On the other hand, though Mrs. Siddons was a passable vocalist, yet I can hardly imagine her powers of singing adapted for the wild tenderness of Ophelia; and, if she succeeded so absolutely in the part, why did she never perform it a second time?

MRS. MOUNTFORD (1669-1701, Genest)\*: During her last years became deranged, but as her disorder was not outrageous, she was not placed under any rigorous confinement, but was suffered to walk about her house. One day in a lucid interval, she asked what play was to be performed that evening, and was told it was to be Hamlet. While she was on the stage, she had acted Ophelia with great applause; the recollection struck her, and, with all that cunning that is so frequently allied to insanity, she found means to elude the care of her attendants, and get to the theatre, where, concealing herself till the scene where Ophelia was to make her ap-

pearance in her mad state, she pushed upon the stage before the person appointed to play the character, and exhibited a representation of it that astonished the performers as well as the audience. She exhausted her vital powers in this effort, was taken home, and died shortly after.

FECHTER'S treatment of the King in the fourth act was that of undisguised contempt. "If your messenger find him not there, seek him i' the other place yourself," and it was seen that if Hamlet were not guarded he would then and there have sent the King to the other place in search of his courtier.

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### ACT V.—THE CHURCHYARD SCENE.

(Davies): Augustin Sly, Tarleton, Kempe, or some old actor of the comic cast, was the original Grave-digger. Cabe Underhill, a comedian whom Sir William Davenant-pronounced to be one of the truest players for humor he ever saw, acted this part forty years successively. He acted till he was past eighty. He was so excellent in the part of Trinculo in the *Tempest*, that he was called Prince Trinculo. He retired in 1703. B. Johnson for above forty years gave a true picture of an archclown in the Grave-digger. His jokes and repartees had a strong effect from his seeming insensibility of their force.

THE ELDER BOOTH (Gould):

HAMLET (*to Horatio*)—"This is Laertes,  
A very noble youth, mark,"





HAASE.



uttered with perfect simplicity and generous high breeding. The princeliness came out more strongly in Mr. Booth's delineations of these latter scenes. When Laertes says:

"A ministering angel shall my sister be,"

Hamlet, according to the text, utters the exclamation:

"What, the fair Ophelia!"

No syllable of this phrase could be heard; only a wild, inarticulate cry escaped him, and he muffled his face in his cloak. He seemed to have gone behind Shakspeare's language to Shakspeare's thought.

"What is he, whose grief  
Bears such an emphasis? whose phrase of sorrow  
Conjures the wand'ring stars, and makes them stand  
Like wonder-wounded hearers? This is I,  
Hamlet, the Dane."

So Shakspeare; but Booth made a full stop after "stand." He then said:

"Look, wonder-wounded hearers, this is I, etc."

The scene, however, was grandly carried to completion. The storm of mingled grief and love for the dead Ophelia, of anger breaking through respect for Laertes, could never have had a more characteristic representation.

FORREST (Alger): Entering slowly with Horatio, he seemed, as he looked about, invested with religious reverence. Then he sat down on a tombstone, and entered easily into conversation in a humorous vein with the clown who was digging a grave. At the same time he kept up an even flow of understanding with Horatio. He so bore himself that the audience could reach no foregone conclusion to withdraw their absorbed attention from the strange funeral phantasmagora on which the

curtain was soon to sink like a pall. Over the skull of Yorick, in quick transition from the bantering with the clown, his reminiscences, not far from mirth, his profound yet simple moralizing, so heartfelt and natural, were naïve, and solemn, and pathetic to the verge of smiles, and awe, and tears. When he learned that Ophelia was dead, and that the grave was for her, he staggered, and bent his head for a moment on the shoulder of his friend Horatio. Though so quickly done, it told the whole story of his love for her and his enforced renunciation.

EDWIN BOOTH (William Winter): Booth directs that one of the skulls thrown up by the grave-digger shall have a tattered and mouldy fool's cap adhering to it, so that it may attract attention, and be singled out from the others as Yorick's skull.

(Mr. Hackett was of the opinion that this line should be accented:

“That SKULL—had a tongue in it and could sing ONCE,”

being a reflection upon the singing of the grave-digger.)

FECHTER (Kate Field): In Fechter's own theatre the churchyard scene was that of a brilliant sunset. His apostrophe to Yorick was singularly tender, carrying the skull almost to his lips, when he put it away with a shiver. Ophelia was brought through the churchyard gateway (not from the church), and the officiating priest wore none of the insignia of his office.

“What! the fair Ophelia!”

and overwhelmed with agony Hamlet fell on his knees beside a tomb, and buried his face in his hands.

IRVING (London *Theatre*): Ophelia is buried at night-fall, first, because that used to be the custom in the case of suicide; and, secondly, because of Hamlet's allusion to the "wandering stars."

The churchyard is on a hill near the palace, and as night comes on the funeral procession wends slowly up the ascent. Never before had the "maimed rites" been so exactly and impressively performed.

In playing Hamlet, Mr. Irving, as everybody knows, does not leap into the grave. True, Hamlet asks Laertes:

"Dost thou come here to whine?  
To outface me with leaping in her grave?  
Be buried quick with her, and so will I;"

but he at once shows that it is all talk, by adding, four lines later:

"Nay, an' thou'lt mouth,  
I'll rant, as well as thou."

KEMBLE (Boaden): At the grave, in the quarrel with Laertes, Kemble was at first thought rather too quiet; but he worked up by degrees to a "towering passion," and finally converted the Ossa into a mere wart by throwing his millions of acres against the burning zone. Of rants, mere intended rants, this is one of the best going, and an especial favorite with the gods of the theatre.

FECHTER (Kate Field): In the controversy between Hamlet and Laertes, Macready and Kemble leaped into the grave and grappled, but Fechter abstained from that absurdity, not approaching the grave until his last word was spoken, when gazing at the gaping void, and at Ophelia's corpse, he was dragged off the stage by Horatio.

CHARLES KEAN (Michael Nugent, 1838): He carries the weeping sentimentality of Hamlet into situations where he is a mere abstract speculator. The beautiful lines commencing: "Imperial Cæsar," do not want tears to enforce their moral—the nothingness of defunct mortality.

EDWIN BOOTH (Miss Calhoun, 1865): The whole stage is open for the graveyard scene. From the shadow of the gloomy trees in the distance, Hamlet and Horatio come slowly forward; Hamlet sits down to rest on a low knoll, and talks with the clown. From the lighted chapel wails a funeral dirge; the sad procession enters; the two friends withdraw and stand uncovered in the shadow of a tall monument. When Laertes says,

"A ministering angel shall my sister be,"

Hamlet starts back, muffles his face in his mantle, and falls on Horatio's neck with a despairing cry, in which all words are lost. In the scene that follows, there is the agony of a wounded soul, but no artificial frenzy; there is the wrestle with Laertes but no pot-house wrangling; there is the sad appeal to the old affection and the memory which should make them friends, but it is the appeal of a proud and a clear soul, not of a weak or sullied one.

(Mrs. Asia Booth Clarke): Booth introduced sitting on the tomb in the graveyard when, with his face half-buried on Horatio's shoulder, he speaks as if to his own heart, the words "What! the fair Ophelia?" His resting previously on the tomb is most natural and graceful.

## SCENE WITH OSRIC.

IRVING (London *Theatre*): The scene between Hamlet and Osric was outside the castle, instead of in a hall, and the line:

“Put your bonnet to its right use; 'tis for the head,”

was not out of place. In saying: “I will walk here in the hall,” Hamlet may have indicated the castle by gesture.

THE ELDER BOOTH (Gould): Hamlet consents to play the wager with Laertes, but is possessed with a presentiment of evil. Mr. Booth sometimes gave the passage thus:

“It is but foolery, but it is such a kind of gaingiving as would, perhaps [*slight pause, then in lower tone*], trouble a woman;”

meaning: “It ought not to trouble me, a man, yet I feel it does.” On other occasions he said:

“As would, perhaps, trouble [*slight pause*] a woman;”

meaning: “But shall not trouble me.”

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## THE LAST SCENE.

THE ELDER BOOTH (Gould): The last scene was full of grace and dramatic truth, in the fencing-match with Laertes, and in its accumulation of tragical results. After Hamlet has wrested the poisoned cup from Horatio's hand, he says:

“If thou didst ever hold me in thy heart,  
Absent thee from felicity awhile,  
And in this harsh world draw thy breath in pain,  
To tell my story.”

Striving against the poison at work in his own frame, he

begs Horatio to live, and lifts his hand toward that heaven whither he felt his noble friend would go, saying:

“Absent thee from felicity awhile.”

FORREST (Alger): He died with philosophic resignation and undemonstrative quietude. While all the mutes and audience to the act looked pale and trembled at the tragic chance, he bequeathed the justification of his memory to his dear Horatio, gave his dying voice for the election of Fortinbras, and slowly, as the potent poison quite o’ercrowed his spirit, let his head sink on the bosom of his one friend, and with a long breath faintly whispers:

“The rest is silence.”

SALVINI (Lewes): The close was magnificent. No more pathetic death has been seen on the stage. Among its many fine touches there was the subtle invention of making the dying Hamlet draw down the head of Horatio to kiss him into silence; which reminds me of the “Kiss me, Hardy,” of the dying Nelson. And this affecting motive was represented by an action as novel as it was truthful—namely, the uncertain hand blindly searching for the dear head, and then faintly closing on it with a sort of final adieu.

IRVING (London *Theatre*): The last scene is laid in a hall, and through some arches at the back may be seen a lawn, and the orchard in which the late King met his death. The change is open to the objection that it renders Hamlet’s “Let the doors be locked” almost unintelligible; yet it may be supposed that the door was the only exit available, and the idea of having the



murderer's punishment meted out to him in sight of the scene of his crime has the element of poetic justice.

FECHTER (Kate Field): Fechter's arrangement of the stage for the final scene: In the background ran a gallery to which a short flight of stairs led on each side of the stage, and by which all exits and entrances were made. To the left sat the King on the throne. The moment Hamlet exclaimed

"Ho! Let the door be locked,  
Treachery! Seek it out,"

the King exhibited signs of fear; and while Laertes made his terrible confession, the regicide stole to the opposite stairs shielding himself from Hamlet's observation, behind a group of courtiers. Laertes no sooner uttered the words,

"The King's to blame,"

than Hamlet turned suddenly to the throne in search of his victim. Discovering the ruse, he rushed up the left-hand stairs, met the King in the centre of the gallery and stabbed him. As Hamlet descended the stairs the poison took effect, and murmuring

"The rest is silence,"

fell dead on the corpse of Laertes. There was no contortion.

J. H. Fitzpatrick: Fechter entirely omitted the attempt of Horatio to poison himself, declaring the incident only an interruption.

WILSON BARRETT: Mr. Barrett does not incline much to the pathetic side of the conception of Horatio. He is far more concerned with his father's picture than with his friend, whom he looks upon more as a valet,

and even employs him when death is glazing his eye to pull his father's miniature out of his pocket in order that he may gaze upon it.

ROSSI (H. P. Phelps): The fencing was a marvel of skill, but the killing of the King was a stroke of genius, in fact a touch of realism almost awful to behold. All through the scene Hamlet's hatred of the murderer had been manifest, particularly when the King drank his health. But when the treachery was all out, and Hamlet knew that he himself was dying, the climax of revenge was reached. The end came quickly and unexpected. Hamlet approached the King sideways and with one swift backward stroke of the rapier, pierces his very heart. It was Italian and it was terrible. Hamlet dies on the throne where he belongs, to the triumphal music of young Fortinbras's return—

“With conquest come from Poland.”

(William Winter): Last of all, the slaughter of the monarch was accomplished with bowl as well as dagger, and it was felt to be a signal mercy that the Melancholy Dane did not wind up by dancing on the royal stomach and taking the annointed scalp.

(Rossi): In the fencing scene Hamlet, aware that Laertes is a skilful swordsman, puts forth his own dexterity to its utmost limit, so that, as a matter of fact, he touches his adversary twice in succession. How is it, that Laertes, so accomplished in the use of the foils, receives two thrusts from the man whose life he has resolved to take? It is because for the first time he contemplates a dishonorable action, and his hand is un-

steadied by his conscience. At the third assault, however, the two advantages obtained by Hamlet stimulate him to press his opponent eagerly; thrusts and parries are rapidly exchanged, and one of the former takes effect upon Hamlet's breast, which is slightly wounded by the poisoned point of Laertes's foil, from which the button has been removed. As soon as Laertes feels that his dastardly purpose has been accomplished, his grasp of the foil slackens, and Hamlet disarms him with ease, offering him, with the courtesy of a high-bred gentleman, his own (Hamlet's) foil, and retaining for his own use the one he had just wrested from his (Laertes') hand. Laertes, "caught in his own springe," cannot refuse, although the King endeavors to stay his hand. Hamlet's attack is irresistible, and his blade, which he does not know to be sharp at the point, passes through his adversary's chest. This is my view of the encounter, and thus do I invariably play it. I hold it an error to assume that Hamlet wounds Laertes because he has been hurt by the latter. In my opinion Hamlet believes the foils to be buttoned in the usual way, and, unaware that Laertes has hit him, makes the last and deadly thrust merely with the object of "winning at the odds." Laertes, when it is too late, comprehends the atrocity of which he has been guilty, confesses his crime, and lays it at the door of the King. At this supreme moment, in which Hamlet becomes at once judge and executioner, I take leave to interpret Shakspeare's idea in action thus: I seize the poisoned foil by the middle of the blade, holding it as one would hold a dagger, rush to the throne, grasp the King's throat, turn away my head, and plunge the deadly steel into his heart. It is

the "incestuous, adulterate beast" whom he is punishing; he therefore slays him without giving him time to defend himself, even forcing him to swallow the poisoned potion, too, so that he may die without having a moment's time wherein to recommend his soul to God.

(Mary Cowden Clarke, writing from Genoa in 1873): The fencing-match in the last scene was an exquisite piece of grace and manliness, while the closing touch of making the Danish prince stagger on to the throned seat when effecting the death of his usurping uncle, and there towering above the mass of human ruin brought about by his kinsman-foe, formed a picturesque and appropriate final effect to the drama.

EDWIN BOOTH (Furness): In the fencing-scene the wounding of Laertes with his own weapon is thus skilfully managed by Mr. Booth: Hamlet secures Laertes's foil by a powerful parry of his thrust in carte, by which Hamlet disarms him; catching his foil as it leaves his grasp with the left hand, Hamlet uses it as a dagger, being too close to him for a free use of his own weapon. Should a stickler for the "code" object to this "pass of practice", it may be urged that the men are "incensed" and excitement must excuse it, and Laertes is estopped from demanding fair play, since his own has been foul from the start.

WILSON BARRETT (*Shakspeariana*): Having at last swooped to his revenge, he sinks, stricken with the poison, in Horatio's arms, his fumbling fingers searching at his breast for what Horatio guesses, finds, and lifts before his eyes—his father's picture—then the

dying face lights up with the fine content of loyal love, and the end is sweet and fit.

MACREADY told the story, retold by Murdoch, of a western actor who supported the English tragedian, playing the King. Macready was anxious to have the King fall in the last act when stabbed, over the steps of the throne and on the right-hand side with his feet to the left, in order that when Hamlet fell he should have the centre of the stage. No objection was made to this request on the part of the actor at rehearsal, but at night, to Hamlet's surprise and disgust, the King wheeled directly around after receiving the sword-thrust, and deliberately fell in the midst of the scene where Hamlet was in the habit of dying, forcing the melancholy prince to find another place as he could. When expostulated with by Mr. Macready, His Majesty coolly replied, "Mr. Macready, we western people don't know much about kings except that they have a habit of doing as they like, and I thought as I was King, I had a right to die wherever I d——d pleased."

MACREADY (Henry Irving): A friend of mine was once a dear friend of William Charles Macready, and was with him at his final performance of Hamlet. The play was over, the curtain had fallen, and the great actor was sadly thinking that for the last time he had acted his much-loved part. Almost unconsciously, as he was taking off his velvet mantle and laying it aside, he muttered Horatio's words, "Good-night, sweet prince," and then, turning to his friend, "Ah," said he, "I am just beginning to realize the sweetness, the tenderness, the gentleness of the character."

### *Hamlet as an Opera.*

Hamlet, an opera by Ambroise Thomas, words by Barbier and Carré, was produced at the Académie in Paris, March 9, 1868; in London in Italian, as Amleto, at Covent Garden, June 19, 1869, with Nilsson and Santley in the principal rôles. Next to Christine Nilsson, the original Ophelia of the lyric stage, Albani has been considered the best representative of the character. The opera has never been popular either in England or in this country. The composer, however, stipulated that Mr. Gye should retain the exclusive English right on condition of presenting it at Covent Garden every season; and for several years it was performed once each season. The play-scene in the opera terminates with a drinking song and chorus for Hamlet and the courtiers. It has been said (Edwards's "Lyrical Drama") that it should have been called Ophelia, as she is the principal person both in a musical and dramatic point of view, and the best scene in the opera is not in the play at all. There is a tinge of Scandinavian national color to the music, by reproducing the character of the Swedish melodies in both the heroine's grand scenas and of employing here and there actual passages of Swedish origin. Nilsson was an admirable representative of the heroine.

Amleto, an opera by Zeno and Gasparini, was brought out in 1711. Dr. Burney says it was written for Venice, but was produced at the Queen's Theatre in London, and the overture had four movements ending with a jig.

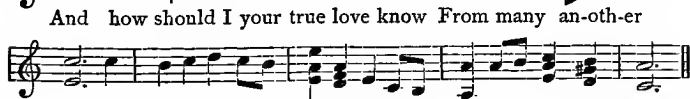
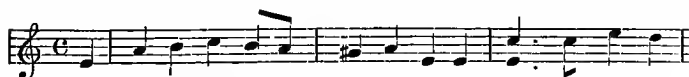
Washington Irving wrote, April 17, 1848, to Mr. James H. Hackett, that within the current century "I have seen the ballet of Hamlet gravely danced at Vienna."

## The Songs and Music.

[*Harper's Magazine.*]

The music sung to the fragments of songs in the character of Ophelia is the same, or very nearly the same, as it was in the time of Shakspeare. Transmitted by tradition, it was endeared to the popular ear by memories which have blended themselves with the melodies, and now refuse to be divorced. When the great fire occurred in Drury Lane in 1812 it destroyed the entire musical library of the theatre, and the copy of these songs was burned; but Dr. Arnold carefully re-noted them from Mrs. Jordan's singing, and it is not likely that more modern music will ever be substituted for these wild, pathetic melodies.

The first three fragments appear to be part of the same ballad, and are very likely, as the king observes, "a conceit upon her father."



one? Oh, by his cock-le hat and staff, And by his san-dal shoon.

He is dead and gone, lady,

He is dead and gone;

At his head a grass-green turf,

At his heels a stone.

White his shroud as the mountain snow,

Larded all with sweet flowers,

Which bewept to the grave did go,

With true-love showers.

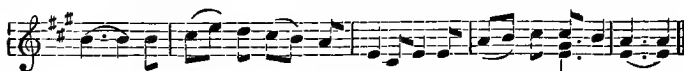
The next two, "Good-morrow, 'tis St. Valentine's Day," and "By Gis and by Saint Charity," are evidently

suggested to her mind by some obscure association with her own unfortunate love. The little song of St. Valentine below has a simple and antique melody that is peculiarly fitting and charming.

*Cheerfully.*



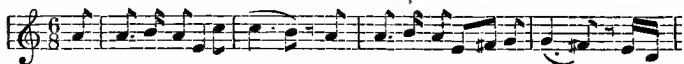
Good mor-row, 'tis St. Valentine's day, All in the morn'g be-



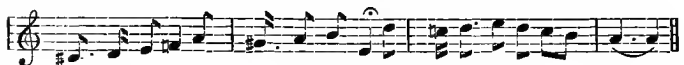
time; And I a maid at your win-dow, To be your Val-en-tine.

The next ballad the poor girl sings shows that her mind has again reverted to her father, and the scene closes with two beautiful fragments, which also were evidently intended to refer to his melancholy fate.

They bore him barefaced on the bier  
And in his grave rain'd many a tear.  
And will he not come again?  
And will he not come again?  
No, no, he is dead;  
Go to thy death-bed,  
He never will come again.



And will he not come a-gain? And will he not come a-gain? No,



no, he is dead; Go to thy death-bed, He nev-er will come a-gain.

The vacillating, wandering mind of Ophelia is rendered painfully apparent at this point by her insertion between these two pathetic verses of two idle, foolish ballad lines:

Down, a-down, an you call him a-down-a,  
and  
For bonny sweet Robin is all my joy.



## The grave-digger's song,

A pickaxe and a spade, a spade,  
 For—and a shrouding sheet;  
 Oh, a pit of clay for to be made  
 For such a guest is meet,

is by all traditions of the stage sung to the following old air, which is the original music to the famous ballad of the "Children in the Wood: "



The other stanzas which he sings are from an old ballad made in Edward the Sixth's or Mary's time, and which is preserved in Chappell's ancient ballad music.

---

### The Quarto Hamlet Acted.

At St. George's Hall, London, April 16, 1881, the first Quarto Hamlet was acted by amateurs. The customs supposed to be in vogue in Shakspeare's days were rigorously observed. No scenery or decoration beyond a raised platform on which the dumb show was presented, was employed, and the costumes were all Elizabethan.

As to this version, two theories are advanced, one that it was the first draft of the play, the other that it was a mutilated and pirated version. It lacks most of the poetry and all that is philosophical.

## Great Casts of Hamlet.

April 29, 1886, at the Academy of Music in New York:

Hamlet.....	Edwin Booth.
Ghost .....	Salvini.
King .....	Barton Hill.
Queen .....	Mrs. D. P. Bowers.
Laertes .....	Alex. Salvini.
Polonius .....	C. W. Couldock.
Ophelia .....	Marie Wainwright.

The most remarkable cast ever given the play in America was at the Wallack benefit at the Metropolitan Opera House in New York, May 21, 1888. It was as follows:

Hamlet .....	Edwin Booth.
Ghost .....	Lawrence Barrett.
King .....	Frank Mayo.
Polonius .....	John Gilbert.
Laertes .....	Eben Plympton.
Horatio .....	John A. Lane.
First Actor.....	Joseph Wheelock.
Second Actor .....	Milnes Levick.
Priest .....	Harry Edwards.
First Grave-digger.....	Joseph Jefferson.
Second Grave-digger .....	W. J. Florence.
Queen .....	Gertrude Kellogg.
Player-Queen.....	Rose Coghlan.
Ophelia .....	Modjeska.

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